EXCLUSIVE Q&A

ROBB GRAVETT

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

MOTORSPORT NEWS

■ OCTOBER 7 2021 ■ EVERY THURSDAY ■ £3.99 ■ FORMERLY MOTORING NEWS

The 1990 tin-top title winner tackles the MN readers' posers P20

Welsh Yaris WRC hero delighted to earn a victory for the Toyota team

EVANS: I'M TAKING IT ONE ROUND AT A TIME

Martin and Evans (r) celebrate glory

Evans' victory has turned up the world title heat

By Matt James

World Rally Championship chaser Elfyn Evans says he will take the run-in round by round after putting himself back in the heart of the title battle with a stunning victory in Finland last weekend.

The Toyota Yaris WRC driver dominated the opposition to land his fifth career win and slash the gap to points leader and team-mate Sebastien Ogier to just 24 points with two rallies remaining on the 2021 schedule.

The victory also marked a home win for Evans' Toyota team, which is based in Puppola and headed by former WRC battler Jari-Matti Latvala.

Evans said: "I'm really happy to be able to give the team a win on their home rally. I always said from the outset, the aim was to do the best on each rally we have left. We have to just focus on doing our best in Spain and worry about the rest later."

As well as Evans' result, Irishman Craig Breen landed his third consecutive podium finish with third place for Hyundai.

Full report p18

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Recycling classic machines for fresh challenge **p16**

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PLOTTING A RALLY RAIDING DREAM

The all-female crew with big ambitions **p30**

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Classic Ford wheels from £69.00 £82.80

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OEM TCA's £63.50 £76.20

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Throttle pedal pad		£5.20	£6.24
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Shock absorber top caps	pair	£13.90	£16.68
Rear bumper side plugs, set of 4		£9.90	£11.88
Oil line bulkhead grommet		£5.10	£6.12
Brake servo rod bellows		£5.20	£6.24

PLEASE NOTE: All prices in Red are EXCLUSIVE OF VAT

COMMENT

Photo: Toyota Gazoo Racing, Paul Lawrence, Motorsport Images, Mick Walker

Elfyn Evans desperately needed to bounce back in Finland – and he really delivered

RIGHT RESULT AT THE RIGHT TIME

Win number five of Elfyn Evans' World Rally Championship career could not have come at a better time. When the pressure ramped up in the battle for the ultimate prize, the Welshman delivered in fine style with victory on last weekend's Rally Finland.

Sure, the chances of him lifting the title this season are still slim. Including the Powerstage bonus marks, there are 60 points up for grabs and only two events left to bank them. Evans' team-mate Sebastien Ogier's 24-point buffer at the top of the table might not be huge, but for a man of Ogier's composure, they should prove sufficient.

But what Evans is racking up is an impressive roster of events won. Just look at his track record: Rally GB, Finland, Sweden are among his trophies, three of the biggest events on the WRC line-up.

As you can read on page nine, the future of a WRC round in the United Kingdom is still hanging by a thread, despite the excellent work being done in the background.

When the UK has one of the leading drivers, it is unthinkable that we won't have a chance to see them perform at the highest level. This is something that the promoters need to address. Often is the time when people hark back to the national media coverage that rallying used to get – especially in the times of Colin McRae and Richard Burns.

Well, we have one of the major players in the game now and there is still an uncertainty as to whether the UK will get a round or not. Some things just don't make sense. This is a perfect chance to spread the message of rallying to the greater British public.

There has to be a vigorous doff of the cap to Craig Breen too for his performances in Finland last weekend.

He has made it clear that he is desperate for a full-time ride in the WRC next season. Just look at the facts: despite being limited to a bit-part programme with Hyundai, the Irishman hasn't finished outside the top three in the last three top-flight events he has tackled. Driving at the very forefront of the WRC is about experience and seat-time, something he hasn't really been granted – certainly not in 2021.

However, Breen grabs each chance with both hands to prove to the world that he deserves a chance at the top table. There really is nothing more he can do and so we hope his optimism at landing a proper shot at a championship challenge next term is justified. He certainly warrants it and Motorsport News is happy to be a cheerleader for him.

Matt James
Editor, Motorsport News
matt.james@kelsey.co.uk

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RACING NEWS

SIMPLIFIED ENGINES SET FOR FORMULA 1

Formula 1 is likely to introduce a simplified engine in 2026 and F1's bosses hope that the move will tempt new manufacturers to join the sport's top flight.

The move will mean that the powerplants rely more on the kinetic energy recovery systems [MGU-K] rather than the hybrid power [MGU-H] that has become prevalent in the motors.

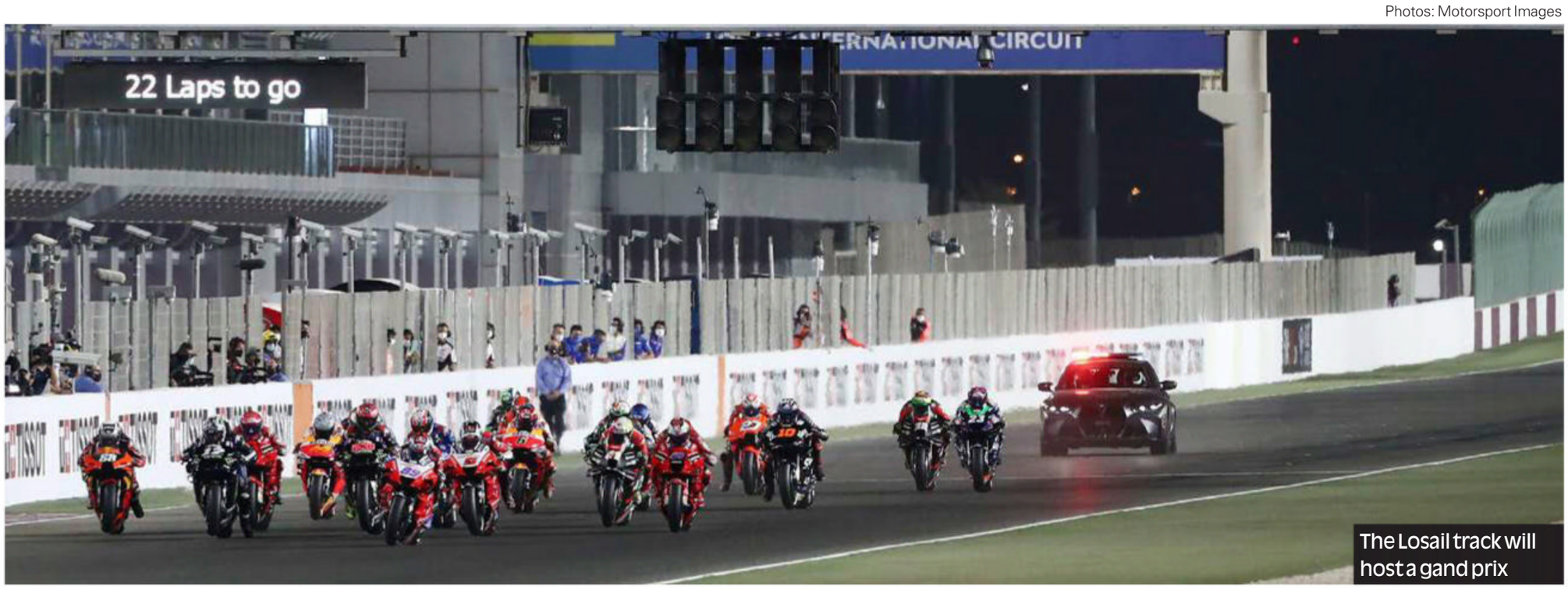
F1 teams have edged towards a plan to delay the next generation engine and make it more workable and these moves have been made while discussions are ongoing with Volkswagen about a new powerplant.

The move would mean the power introduced into the engine from the MGU-K systems is boosted from the current 161bhp to 469bhp.

Some of the engine firms were keen to retain the hybrid element of the engines as they feel it is a cutting-edge part of the technology in grand prix motors, but the increasing move towards electrification of road car engines means that this thrust has now been downplayed.

Volkswagen's interest in the new powerplant and the regulations has sparked speculation that it could link up with Red Bull in the future.

Photos: Motorsport Images



The Losail track will host a gand prix

QATAR ADDED TO 22-RACE GRAND PRIX LINE UP FOR 2021

Ten-year deal for Middle Eastern country to host Formula 1 races

By Matt James

Qatar has been added to the Formula 1 schedule this season with a race planned for the Losail circuit in November.

The race will take place on November 21 and is part of a 10-year deal for the country to host a Formula 1 grand prix. Qatar will not hold a race in 2022 as it is the host nation for World Cup but will return to the line-up in 2023.

While the initial race will be held on the Losail circuit, which has previously hosted rounds of the Moto GP series, future events will be at a new venue, most likely to be a street race in the country's capital, Doha.

Qatar will be the fourth venue in the Middle East to host a F1 race, alongside Bahrain, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia, which will make its debut on the F1 calendar this season in December.

The race at the Losail circuit in November will start at 1800hrs local time, which means it will take place under floodlight, as has been the case with Moto GP events.

The announcement of the race in Qatar means that there will be seven races remaining on the 2021 schedule and it brings the number of rounds up to 22.

SCHEDULE

Remaining F1 races

DATE	VENUE
October 10	Istanbul, Turkey
October 24	Austin, Texas
November 7	Mexico City, Mexico
November 14	Interlagos, Brazil
November 21	Losail, Qatar
December 5	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
December 12	Yas Marina, Abu Dhabi

Track treatment should offer more grip for the Turkish Grand Prix

SURFACE TREATMENT TO IRON OUT TURKISH GP PROBLEMS

Circuit bosses have worked on the surface of the Istanbul track, which is due to host this weekend's grand prix, to avoid the chaos that struck the event in 2020.

The circuit was reintroduced to the Formula 1 calendar in 2020 after nine years away and rain meant that the track was highly slippery for all drivers. It had been resurfaced a couple of weeks before the race and the new asphalt caused numerous problems.

The drivers used Pirelli's harder compound dry rubber in last year's event and complained that they could not get heat into the tyres.

FIA race director Michael Masi has told teams that "the entire track surface has been treated to increase the grip level."

Masi said: "We do regularly each season send updates to the teams about any circuit changes for upcoming events. Be they be barriers, fences, gates, whatever. It may be areas of resurfacing. So yes, the surface in Turkey has been effectively water-blasted, would probably be the best way to put it, which is a regular treatment that happens.

"We have seen that regularly used in Singapore as an example, where the public roads that are used they resurface those quite regularly because of the movement. That is what has happened there, along with a few other changes."

GIOVINAZZO FOCUSED ON REMAINING WITH ALFA

Italian racer Antonio Giovinazzi says he is not considering any other options as he battles for his spot on the Formula 1 grid in 2022.

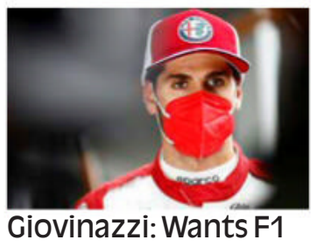
Giovinazzi's current Alfa Romeo team is the only vacant spot on the grid next term as all other teams have confirmed their line-ups. Mercedes refugee Valtteri Bottas will move to the team in 2022 taking the place of the retiring Kimi Raikkonen, while Giovinazzi's future is still unclear.

The 27-year-old Ferrari Development Driver has raced for the team for three seasons and his best result was in Brazil in 2019, when he finished in fifth spot.

He said: "To be honest, for now, I want to focus to keep this seat in Formula 1.

"Then if in the worst case, I would start to think about for next year. But for now, I just want to focus on my job here in F1, and try to keep my seat."

Giovinazzi was unsure about a timeline on a decision from Alfa Romeo about his future, saying it was "not a question for me" but instead one for his team principal, Frederic Vasseur. "The only thing I can do is just drive and get to more points and I hope that will be enough," Giovinazzi added.



Giovinazzi: Wants F1

DRIVER LINE-UP 2022

Formula 1

TEAM	DRIVER
Alfa Romeo	Valtteri Bottas
Alfa Romeo	TBA
AlphaTauri	Pierre Gasly
AlphaTauri	Yuki Tsunoda
Alpine	Fernando Alonso
Alpine	Esteban Ocon
Aston Martin	Sebastian Vettel
Aston Martin	Lance Stroll
Ferrari	Charles Leclerc
Ferrari	Carlos Sainz
Haas	Nikita Mazepin
Haas	Mick Schumacher
McLaren	Daniel Ricciardo
McLaren	Lando Norris
Mercedes	Lewis Hamilton
Mercedes	George Russell
Red Bull	Max Verstappen
Red Bull	Sergio Perez
Williams	Nicolas Latifi
Williams	Alex Albon

F2 AND F3 REVERT TO A STANDARD CALENDAR IN 2022

Formula 2 and Formula 3 will return to sharing grand prix weekends next season after the two categories were split up this year.

The controversial move, aimed at reducing costs, meant that the two sub-F1 classes effectively ran on alternate race weekends in 2021, but this caused some scheduling problems and lengthy gaps in the calendar for both classes.

The Formula 2 class went from 12 to eight meetings this year, while Formula 3 had seven races, down from nine in the previous season. One of the reasons for the move was to help teams that run cars in both categories use staff more efficiently.

However, category bosses have now decided to revert to having both classes on the same weekend "wherever possible" in the future.

The FIA Formula 3 championship concluded at the Russian Grand Prix where Prema Racing driver Dennis Hauger claimed the crown. There are two meetings remaining for the FIA Formula 2 competition this season at the new Jeddah street circuit in Saudi Arabia and the finale at Abu Dhabi in the middle of December. The F2 points table is being led by Prema driver Oscar Piastri.

The Formula 2 pack will return alongside FIA Formula 3 in 2022

BTCC ADOPTS A NEW ONBOARD SIGNALLING DISPLAY FOR 2022

System fitted to cars to give an early warning to drivers

Photo: Motorsport Images, Jakob Ebrey

BTCC racers will get a new system

By Matt James

The British Touring Car Championship will introduce a new onboard signalling system for 2022 to warn drivers of any potential hazards.

The new hardware will allow messages from race control to be sent directly to machines as they are circulating. It will be used to let racers know about any yellow flag zones, red flags or safety car interventions, as well as containing messages about any black or black-and-white flag infringements.

It will be used in conjunction with the traditional flag signals and LED lightboard that are in operation at many circuits.

As well as the BTCC, the system is expected to be incorporated in support classes too, with Porsche and Formula 4 already confirming that they will adopt the procedure.

The race control system software has been developed by Timing Solutions Limited (TSL), the long-time supplier of timing and scoring systems to TOCA.

BTCC chief executive Alan Gow said: "[BTCC organiser] TOCA continues to take the lead when it comes to introducing technology, sustainability and safety innovations within British motorsport, and we are proud to be introducing this onboard visual signalling system from 2022 onwards. This is a very significant safety enhancement for our BTCC drivers and indeed our trackside marshals, and one which I'm sure will also be adopted by our valued support championships.

"It's vital to stress, however, that this important safety tool will supplement – not replace – the traditional flag system deployed by the marshals, which remains such an intrinsic part of the safety protocols."

Auer won DTM race

LAWSON IN CHARGE IN DTM AS IT NEARS CLIMAX

Kelvin van der Linde has lost the lead of the DTM table with just one meeting remaining on the 2021 schedule despite winning the opening race at Hockenheim last weekend.

Van der Linde, driving for the Team Abt team in an Audi R8, won the opening race from pole position ahead of F1 refugee Alex Albon.

However, van der Linde was involved in a wheel-to-wheel battle with title rival Liam Lawson's AF Corse Ferrari in the second event. Van der Linde was penalised for his part in contact between the two and then his hopes were further dented by a slow pitstop.

That allowed Mercedes driver Lucas Auer to claim the victory ahead of Lawson, who has now moved into the championship lead.

Lawson has a 14-point advantage and the final meeting takes place at the Norisring this weekend.

INDYCAR LOOKS TO GO BACK TO ITS ROOTS IN DETROIT

The Belle Isle Indycar circuit is on the verge of being dropped from the American single-seater schedule and replaced with a new event at another location in Detroit.

A presentation was made last weekend to local council members to reconstitute the circuit at a location which is closer to the original site of the old Formula 1 circuit, which was on the grand prix schedule from 1982 through to 1988 before the event switched to IndyCar.

The move is being made, according to a spokesperson, to "create more of a connection with the city [and to] provide more energy, be more inclusive and to get the local residents more energised about the event".

It follows in the footsteps of other downtown Indycar events, which have proved a success in 2021. A race in Nashville joined the Long Beach event in the 2021 roster and has been a hit with drivers and with fans.

The Detroit race is scheduled to be the seventh round of the 2022 series, which will kick off at its traditional curtain-raiser at St Petersburg on February 27. The final round of the contest will be at Laguna Seca on September 11.

Belle Isle might be replaced by a new IndyCar venue

Pagenaud will split from the Penske team

TEAM SWAP FOR INDYCAR CHAMPION PAGENAUD

French racer Simon Pagenaud has left the Penske IndyCar team and will drive for the Mayer Shank outfit in 2022.

The 2019 Indy 500 winner and 2016 series champion will line up alongside fellow Indy 500 winner Helio Castroneves in the team, which will run two full-time entries for the first time. Pagenaud will take the place of British racer Jack Harvey in the squad.

Team boss Mike Shank said: "Next year will be a big year for MSR and I think we have a very strong line-up of drivers between Simon and Helio.

"We have built this programme every year, growing with our partners and working to have all the ingredients we need to be competitive.

MSR won the Indy 500 this season with Castroneves at the wheel. Pagenaud finished in eighth spot in the standings in 2021 but failed to take a race win.

TAYLOR-SMITH COMMITS TO BTCC IN LONG-TERM DEAL

British Touring Car Championship racer Aron Taylor-Smith has signed a multi-year deal to remain in the category with Team Hard.

The Irish racer, who returned to the BTCC this season to pilot one of the new Team Hard Cupra machines, is a four-time race winner in the BTCC. He stepped away from the series at the end of 2017 before rejoining the line-up for 2021.

The 31-year-old said: "I have never felt more at home in a team than I do at Team Hard and that has been one of the main contributing factors to remaining here. The work that they are doing behind the scenes is second to none and I am 100% confident that we can make the Cupra a force to be reckoned with in the BTCC.

"To have the security of knowing that I will be on the grid for years to come is amazing."

Team boss Tony Gilham added: "The results may not have fallen Aron's way so far this season, but he has always shown strong pace and with a little more luck he will be back fighting at the sharp end."

Taylor-Smith is 22nd in the points table this season and has scored a best result of 11th place in the opening meeting of the year at Thruxton.

Taylor-Smith has committed his future to Team Hard in BTCC

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RACING NEWS

MOTORSPORT UK LAUNCHES BRITISH F4 ORGANISER TENDER

Motorsport UK has launched a tender seeking an organising club to co-promote and act as local organiser for British Formula 4 for up to three years from next season.

The governing body will from 2022 take over organisation of the championship previously promoted by RacingLine and with the British Racing and Sports Car Club as administering club.

The tenders are to outline proposed key officials including the clerk of the course, plus safety, safeguarding and marketing and promotion details. They must be submitted by noon on October 13.

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers told Motorsport News: "There was a bit of misunderstanding there at the time [we took over as organiser], it was always our intention to have an organising club."

O'Sullivan: in final four

AWARD FINAL FOUR REVEALED

The four finalists for this year's Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver Award have been confirmed.

The quartet, taken from a 10-driver shortlist that was unveiled last month, are German and Italian Formula 4 frontrunner Ollie Bearman, GB3 champion-elect Zak O'Sullivan, FIA Formula 3 racer Jonny Edgar and Euroformula Open race-winner Louis Foster.

All four are newcomers to the award.

Photos: Motorsport Images, Jakob Ebrey, Paul Lawrence

Virtuosi joining British F4 in '22

Four frontrunning teams from 2021 are staying on

BRITISH F4 SET TO BE "EUROPE'S PREMIER" WITH SEVEN TEAMS SIGNED FOR 2022

Revamped junior single-seater contest so far has three new teams plus four committed to stay

By Graham Keilloh

The boss of British Formula 4 recruit Virtuosi Racing has said the revamped junior single-seater contest is set for Europe-leading status with seven high-calibre teams confirmed so far for 2022.

FIA Formula 2 frontrunner Virtuosi last week joined Chris Dittmann Racing and Hitech GP in adding British F4 to its 2022 roster, while the top four in the current teams' standings – Argenti, Carlin, Fortec and JHR Developments – are all remaining.

Virtuosi's Andy Roche said: "British F4's upcoming overhaul provides the ideal time to join, with a number of key changes set to level the playing field, alongside a fleet of high-calibre teams joining that we believe will make it the premier championship of its level in Europe."

The British Touring Car Championship support next year switches to the brand-new Generation-2 Tatuus chassis, with an FIA-mandated halo, and a 180bhp Abarth engine, replacing its Mygale-Ford.

Hugh Chambers, CEO of British F4's new organiser Motorsport UK, told Motorsport News: "We're thrilled. It really does vindicate everything that we're doing. Having seven of the top teams in the world subscribing to it and buying cars is as good an endorsement as you can get."

British F4 is also set to beat its grid numbers from the ongoing season, wherein six teams have competed and one of those, Richardson, with a part-time single-car entry.

Chambers predicts more teams to come too: "We're only at the beginning of October, there's plenty more to come. We know teams who are now at the point of making that decision."

MASON SETS MIDLAND TITLE IN STONE

Westfield driver Ash Mason clinched the Midland Hill Climb Championship during a nail-biting final round at Loton Park 10 days ago when he edged Porsche 911 driver Paul Howells by just four points.

With over 150 contenders competing across nine events, it was a record-breaking season for the championship. David Warburton's fine season in his 1600cc Gould GR59 earned him third place in the final standings.

Mason in his Westfield sealed the Midland title

Olivia Cooper is in the British team heading to Braga

TOP BRITISH SQUAD HEADS TO MASTERS HILLCLIMB

A team of 17 drivers from British hillclimbing, led by 2021 British champion Wallace Menzies, will compete in this weekend's FIA Hillclimb Masters event at Braga in Portugal.

Seven of the final top-10 runners in this year's British contest will make the trip, backed by leading drivers from across the classes including top under-25 driver Tom Weaver (Van Diemen RF91) and leading female hillclimber Olivia Cooper (Force TA).

The FIA event brings together the best hillclimbers in Europe for a one-off competition, and more than 150 competitors from 22 countries will attend.

The two-mile course runs on part of the famous 'Rampa da Falperra' course near the city of Braga in northern Portugal.

Things "clicked" for Zagazeta last winter

CONFIDENCE KEY FOR BRITISH F4 LEADER ZAGAZETA

British Formula 4 points leader Matias Zagazeta has said his improvements taking him to the table top are due to confidence in the junior single-seater.

The Peruvian for 2021 switched from Carlin to Argenti for his second British F4 season, and he took over at the points summit at last month's Croft meeting and has stayed there since.

Zagazeta said: "Last year was a new car, I was coming from karting and I took a bit longer to adapt, I was not feeling connected with the car.

"Whereas during the winter all of a sudden it just clicked and I felt at one with the car. From every race weekend that's gone I get more and more confident with the car. Confidence eventually gives you more speed as you're more on the edge, you maximize what you have, and you make more moves as well. Last year in testing I didn't even make an overtake until the first race. [Racecraft] was the main issue [last year].

"Argenti, it's a lot like a family, everyone's together as one. Team boss Michael Meadows is so involved."

USER-FRIENDLY 13-EVENT HILLCLIMB SCHEDULE REVEALED

No Barbon Manor and only one Loton Park event are key changes for 2022's British Hillclimb Championship calendar as organisers seek to further reduce a traditionally long and daunting schedule.

The annual visits to the Channel Island hills of Bouley Bay and Val des Terres are back on the calendar but Barbon Manor is being rested and Loton Park is pegged back to a single event, as the championship finale in late September.

Prescott, Harewood and Shelsley Walsh are the three hills to feature twice in the 13-event season.

"It's a good calendar," said new champion Wallace Menzies. "It's good to try different things," he added, acknowledging that the previous 16 or 17 events was a daunting schedule to fit around business and family life.

Championship co-ordinator Tim Wilson said: "We've taken a lot of feedback from our competitors in recent times, and a slightly reduced schedule is popular. There will be some double-header events."

It is likely that double-headers, featuring four championship run-offs across two days, will run at Gurston Down in May and Wiscombe Park in July and may be run at other events to be confirmed.

CALENDAR

2022 BHC

DATE	VENUE
April 23-24	Prescott
April 30	Craigantlet
May 7-8	Harewood
May 28-29	Gurston Down
June 4-5	Shelsley Walsh
June 18-19	Doune
July 3	Harewood
July 13	Bouley Bay
July 16	Val des Terres
July 30-31	Wiscombe Park
August 13/14	Shelsley Walsh
September 3-4	Prescott
September 24-25	Loton Park

Prescott gets two visits on 2022's BHC calendar

FASTEST-EVER GINETTA RACING PROMISED WITH GT4 SUPERCUP G56 CAR UPGRADE

Ginetta category gets major performance boost with G56 seen fighting for victory in British GT this year

Photos: Ginetta, International GT Open, Porsche GB

Car will run to same spec as British GT4's frontrunner

The G56's 6.2-litre 500bhp V8 is a big upgrade on G55 predecessor

By Graham Keilloh

The fastest ever one-make Ginetta racing is promised next season with the Ginetta GT4 Supercup switching to the much more powerful Ginetta G56.

The G56 replaces the G55 that has been used since the championship's launch in 2011. It will run to the same specification as that competing in British GT's GT4 championship this season with Assetto Motorsport, which narrowly missed out on Brands Hatch season-opener victory. A down-rated G56 is also used in GT Academy.

The GT4 Supercup G56's 500bhp 6.2-litre V8 engine represents a vast power increase on the G55's 3.7-litre unit. The existing G55 will however remain in the GT4 Supercup next year in a new class, that will run alongside the continuing Pro and Am classes.

Ginetta chairman Lawrence Tomlinson said: "The G56 has already proven itself to be a leading contender in GT competition and it will be great asset to the GT4 Supercup.

"It's an exciting new chapter for the championship, and further cements its status as an ideal stepping stone for aspiring career GT and prototype drivers.

"Drivers can learn the ropes in the GT4 Supercup before progressing into GT racing in the exact same car, while teams have the opportunity to run a G56 in the GT4 Supercup and other championships without changing the car spec."

DE HAAN EXPLAINS TF SPORT OUTING

Twice British GT runner-up Sam De Haan has explained his surprise debut for multiple champion team TF Sport at International GT Open's Red Bull Ring double-header last month.

De Haan, who usually competes in a RAM Racing Mercedes, in Austria raced a TF Aston Martin Vantage GT3 with Charlie Eastwood. They won race two dominantly having got second in a rain-interrupted race one.

De Haan told Motorsport News: "Just had some space in the calendar, was looking to do a couple more races, [we] thought that Red Bull Ring would be a good option. Unfortunately the RAM boys weren't available due to their British GT commitments.

"So we decided to do a bit of dabble. I always wanted to try some other cars so we thought we'd have a go with Aston, and TF are the best team in Europe at running the Aston Martin so I thought why not? Turned out to be a successful weekend."

De Haan (l) decided to "dabble" with TF's Aston and won in Austria

CWS Racing and White are on British GT fact-finding mission

CWS ADDS SECOND GINETTA G56 TO BRITISH GT LINE-UP

Reigning Ginetta GT4 Supercup Pro-Am champion Colin White with CWS Racing will add a Ginetta G56 to next weekend's Donington Park British GT championship season-closer grid.

White running as a guest will be joined by long-time Ginetta factory driver Mike Simpson in what's considered a fact-finding mission ahead of CWS's expected full-season 2022 British GT entry.

For 65-year-old White, who has raced Ginetta's G55 in British GT3 and GTC, it will be his first British GT outing since 2014. Simpson meanwhile made his last British GT4 appearance with Century in 2017.

White said: "I've only heard good things about the [G56] and can't wait to get out there. It's also an opportunity to see how much the class and series has changed over the last seven years."

THOMPSON TO RETURN WITH MINI CHALLENGE UK OUTINGS

Tin-top battler Bobby Thompson will join the Mini Challenge UK grid for the last two rounds of this season.

Thompson, who is aiming to return to the British Touring Car Championship next season, has tied up a deal to drive for Jamsport at Donington Park this weekend and again at Brands Hatch in October. The Essex racer, 25, said: "This is a chance to get back out in something competitive. The standard is high in the Mini Challenge UK but it is a great chance to get some mileage under my belt and make sure my name is out there as we look towards returning to the BTCC."

Thompson made his debut in Mini racing in the Super Mighty Mini class at Brands Hatch in August and was a race winner.

Thompson has hatched a Mini plan

UK CHAMPIONS TO GET PORSCHE CONTEST ENTRY DISCOUNT

Champions across a range of UK categories will be offered half-price entries to 2022's Porsche Carrera Cup GB and Sprint Challenge GB in a new incentive to attract driving talent.

The eligible champions from 2021 are those in British GT3 and GT4, British Formula 4, Ginetta GT4 Supercup's Pro class, Ginetta Junior, Mini Challenge JCW and the Porsche Club GB championship's Class 1.

In the two Porsche contests' unveiled calendars for 2022, Carrera Cup will return to Thruxton for the first time since experiencing tyre problems at the high-speed track in 2020. The Sprint Challenge, for its third season, expands to 15 races from 12 and retains its mix of British GT and BTCC appearances.

CALENDAR

2022 Porsche Carrera Cup GB

DATE	VENUE	ROUNDS
April 23-24	Donington Park	1 & 2
May 14-15	Brands Hatch (Indy)	3 & 4
June 11-12	Oulton Park	5 & 6
July 30-31	Knockhill	7 & 8
Aug 13-14	Snetterton	9 & 10
Aug 27-28	Thruxton	11 & 12
Sep 24-25	Silverstone (National)	13 & 14
Oct 8-9	Brands Hatch (GP)	15 & 16

CALENDAR

2022 Porsche Sprint Challenge GB

DATE	VENUE	ROUNDS
May 7-8	Silverstone GP (British GT)	1, 2 & 3
May 28-29	Thruxton (TOCA)	4 & 5
June 24-26	Croft (TOCA)	6 & 7
TBC	TBC (Porsche Club GB)	8 & 9
Sep 10-11	Brands Hatch GP (British GT)	10, 11 & 12
Oct 15-16	Donington Park GP (British GT)	13, 14 & 15

Porsches have a new incentive

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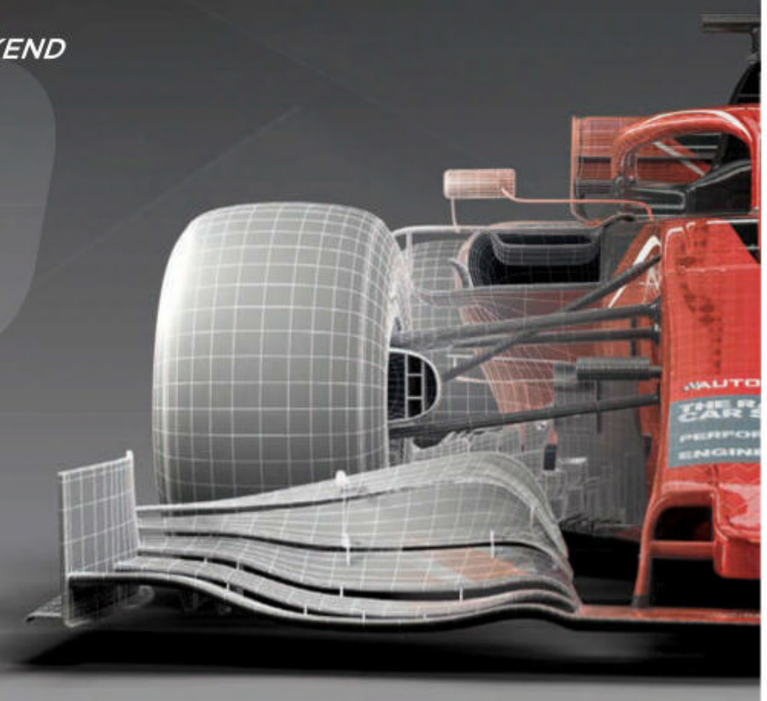

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RALLY NEWS

RALLY NORTHERN IRELAND BATTLING FOR ONE OF THE REMAINING 2022 CALENDAR SLOTS

New two-year extension deal for Rally Finland means a UK round is hanging on by a thread

Photo: Jakob Ebrey, Toyota Gazoo Racing, Hyundai

The Northern Irish lanes could host WRC in 2022

By Graham Lister

Rally Northern Ireland is in a three-way fight for a World Rally Championship calendar slot in 2022.

The development follows confirmation of Rally Finland's contract extension with WRC Promoter, which was inked on the eve of last week's 70th edition and covers the next two seasons.

Finland is now the 10th country to secure a place on the planned 13-round 2022 schedule and joins Estonia, Greece, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Monte Carlo, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, leaving three spots up for grabs.

Motorsport News understands Croatia and New Zealand will be added to that list ahead of the draft calendar being submitted for FIA World Motor Sport Council approval on October 15 with Northern Ireland still in the frame to follow suit.

Rally Northern Ireland head Bobby Willis has remained tight-lipped on the prospect of his Belfast-based event joining the WRC roster for the first time in 2022 but sources suggest the Tarmac rally's inclusion is a formality subject to government funding being approved.

As a founding round of the WRC in 1973 and one of the championship's jewels in the crown, Finland was always a favourite for a 2022 date. However, despite its success and popularity, the event has traditionally relied upon private funding and ticket sales for cashflow rather than government support.

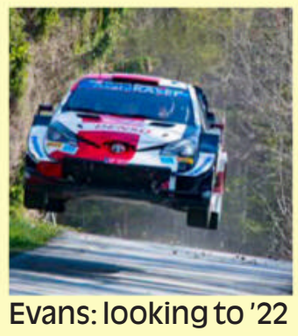
That made its continued inclusion unclear, particularly due to the effects of last year's cancellation due to Covid-19 and the postponement from July to October this season and the expected resulting loss of income. But backing from new title sponsor Secto Automotive, a Finnish car leasing company, has helped to get a new two-year deal rubber stamped.

Rally Finland chief Riku Bitter said: "I must thank the Rally Finland stakeholders for their unwavering commitment and, of course, the fans for their backing, particularly in light of the challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"While remaining part of the WRC is a great privilege and a key target, it's particularly the case given the advent of the hybrid-based Rally1 regulations and the WRC's switch to sustainable fuel from 2022.

"Naturally we will do all we can to ensure Rally Finland remains part of the WRC for the long term.

WRC Promoter boss Jona Siebel added: "Fans across the globe will be delighted with this news. It is, after all, hard to imagine a WRC season without a visit to Finland's roller coaster roads. I thank AKK Sports for its efforts and perseverance in making the rally happen against the backdrop and difficulties caused by the pandemic."



Evans: looking to '22

LATVALA READY TO HELP OUT EVANS ON HYBRID SWITCH

Elfyn Evans will be able to call on team boss Jari-Matti Latvala for extra advice if, as expected, he forms part of Toyota's Rally1 line-up next season.

Latvala, the World Rally Championship's most experienced driver with 209 starts, wants to get behind the wheel of the new-generation Toyota Yaris to better understand the car and help his drivers progress.

"I want to understand what the drivers are talking about," Latvala told WRC.com. "I feel I can't bring the same value if I can't understand what they are talking about."

Latvala was a factory driver with Ford and Toyota when the most recent technical rule cycles were introduced in 2011 and 2017 respectively.

Evans and current team-mate Kalle Rovanpera tested the hybrid-based Yaris for the first time in France in August. Only test driver Juho Hanninen had previously driven the car.

Breen was in the points again on Rally Finland last weekend for the Hyundai team

Irishman says that there will be an announcement

BREEN NEARS A FULL-TIME DEAL FOR WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Craig Breen says "there's light at the end of the tunnel" as far as his chances of securing a full-time ride in next season's World Rally Championship are concerned.

Speaking ahead of Rally Finland, the Irishman said "things are progressing". And while he has refused to comment on speculation linking him to a M-Sport Ford Puma Rally1 for the hybrid-based era, he suggested that an announcement would be made soon.

"Things are progressing, definitely [and] I think there's a bit of light at the end of the tunnel now," the 31-year-old said. "I would be hoping in the next… it's got less than months anyway, it's not quite at days yet. But in the next couple of weeks things should be a little more clear. I feel positive and that's the most important thing."

Breen is currently in a car-sharing arrangement with Dani Sordo at Hyundai but has made no secret of his desire to complete a full campaign.

With Thierry Neuville and Ott Tanak signed up on long-term contracts with the South Korean make, Breen's hopes of more Hyundai seat team have diminished, particularly given the likelihood of Oliver Solberg tackling more events in the WRC's top tier next season, potentially as part of a split programme with Sordo.

Solberg will drive a semi-works Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC on Rally Spain later this month, with Teemu Suninen – who left M-Sport in August after being demoted permanently to its WRC2 squad – taking over the Swede's i20 N Rally2 for the Salou-based round.

Of his prospects for more Hyundai employment, Suninen said: "Honestly, I don't know. We have to see how I can drive in Spain. I believe if we can make good results we can have quite a future. If not, I don't know what we are going to do."

SIM RACER IS THE FIRST TO GRAB STAR DRIVER SLOT

The first Brit to reach the FIA Rally Star European continental final in January has been revealed.

John Bebnowicz-Harris, 25, has qualified as the winner of the 10th Rally at Home Challenge online contest organised by motorsport's world governing body as an alternative to the national selection events being put in place by ASNs, including Motorsport UK.

Bebnowicz-Harris said: "I really enjoy the competition element of sim racing and decided to give Rally Star #RallyAtHome Challenge a go to see how I fare. The competition was so close – you had to be really careful and minimise the mistakes in the Ford Fiesta Rally3. I enjoyed it and progressing to the Continental Final is the cherry on top of the cake."

The European continental final of FIA Rally Star is scheduled to take place at Estering Buxtehude in Germany from January 28-30.

A full season of international rallying in 2023 ahead of a WRC programme is up for grabs.

RALLY NEWS

Edwards: happy with pace

EDWARDS: TRACKROD WIN GOOD LEVERAGE FOR EUROPEAN FUTURE

British Rally champion Matt Edwards believes his dominant Trackrod Rally Yorkshire win could prove to be "good leverage" for his future.

Edwards has competed in R5/Rally2 rally cars since halfway through 2016 and has won the last two British Rally Championship titles in 2018 and '19. His recent victory on round four this year was a crushing one as he won five of the six stages and the opening 11-miler in the dark by 17.3 seconds.

He admitted a lot of work went into making sure he "nailed" the opening stage. "It was the key to building an early lead and taking the pressure off for when the rally restarted in daylight," Edwards said. "And with the pressure off you can drive better and more freely.

"I'm still learning the [Volkswagen] Polo R5, but it was fantastic to be able to drive the car in that way. Everything just clicked. It was a fairly effortless rally, which shows that everything worked as it should have."

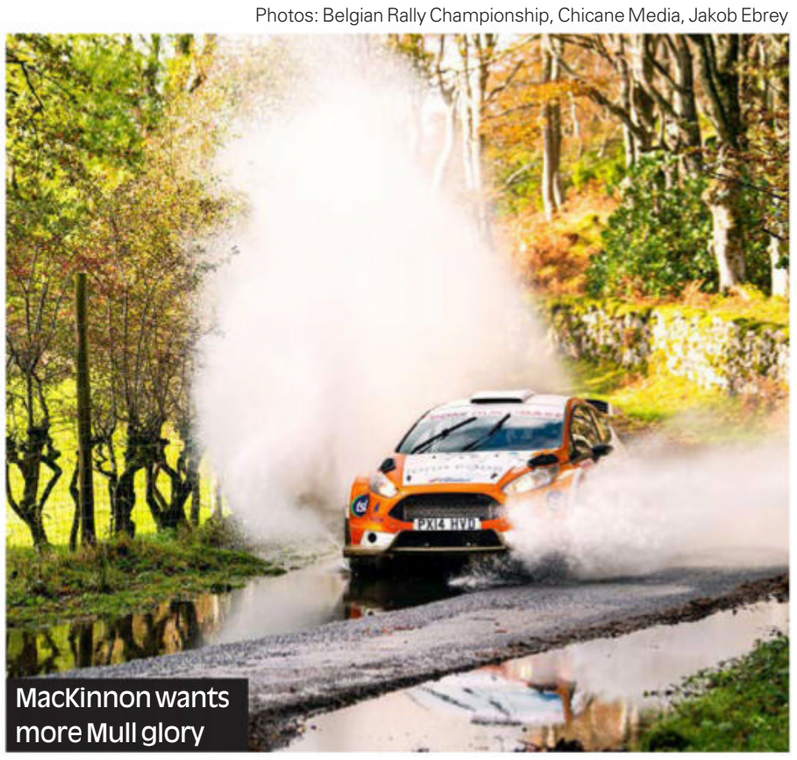
The win puts him four points adrift of series leader and Melvyn Evans Motorsport team-mate Osian Pryce ahead of this weekend's Mull Rally, despite his non-score on the Grampian. The best five scores from seven count towards the final points tally.

"I'm pleased to win the event by such a big margin. It's good leverage for the future," Edwards added. "I want to go to Europe and do more events and it shows that the pace is there. There is always the bigger picture and for next year who knows?"

MACKINNON AWARE ANOTHER MULL VICTORY IS A "BIG ASK"

Local knows he will face tough opposition on home event

Photos: Belgian Rally Championship, Chicane Media, Jakob Ebrey


MacKinnon wants more Mull glory

SEEDED ENTRY LIST

Mull Rally

SEED	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1	Paul MacKinnon/Paul Beaton	Ford Fiesta Rally2
2	Daniel Harper/Chris Campbell	Mini JCW WRC
3	John MacCrone/Stuart Loudon	Ford Fiesta Rally2
4	Matt Edwards/Darren Garrod	Volkswagen Polo GTI R5
5	Osian Pryce/Noel O'Sullivan	Volkswagen Polo GTI R5
6	Rhys Yates/James Morgan	Ford Fiesta Rally2
7	Lewis Gallagher/Harry Marchbank	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
8	David Bogie/John Rowan	Ford Escort Mk2
9	David Wright/Paula Swinscoe	Ford Fiesta R5
10	James MacGillivray/Kerrie MacGillivray	Ford Escort Mk2

By Luke Barry

Defending Mull Rally winner Paul MacKinnon says he would have kicked himself had he not competed this year, but thinks taking another win in 2021 is "a pretty big ask" against British Rally Championship opposition.

Mull has been added to the BRC calendar for the first time this year, complicating local driver MacKinnon's bid for a fourth victory on the island. But he has several other mitigating factors too, as he hasn't competed since Mull 2019 nor has he ever driven a left-hand-drive rally car before. He'll drive a Ford Fiesta Rally2 from CA1 Sport this weekend.

"It's pretty much just straight in at the deep end," MacKinnon told MN. "It would've been quite easy this year with everything to maybe not put the effort in, but I think because it is a bit more special this year – and also [with] the lay-off too it's great to see it back – but the calibre of people competing, you've got to really take part. You'd kick yourself if you didn't."

On his victory chances, MacKinnon added: "I think for once it's a pretty big ask, I'm pretty realistic. I follow rallying quite closely and I think maybe for folk that aren't up to speed with it they might underestimate these guys and say 'local knowledge trumps it'. But the fact is they can go anywhere and be extremely competitive if not dominate the local guys in Ireland, England, Wales, wherever.

"At the end of the day I'd be more surprised if they didn't [beat me] rather than the other way," he said. "But it's great, it's not something to worry about, it's something to embrace. If we can get round at the end without any whoopsies, that'll be the [main] thing."

The BRC contingent is led by reigning champion Matt Edwards, championship leader Osian Pryce and M-Sport's Rhys Yates. They are however the only three top-class entrants as James Wilson pulled his entry and Matthew Wilson, Keith Cronin, Seb Perez and Ollie Mellors never intended to compete.

Of the Mull regulars, 2002 winner Daniel Harper once again returns in his Mini JCW WRC while 2013 and '16 victor John MacCrone has secured a deal to drive Cronin's regular Ford Fiesta Rally2. David Wright will be a threat in his older-generation Fiesta R5, as will David Bogie who leads the two-wheel-drive runners in his Ford Escort Mk2.

SIMPSON TO MAKE LONG-AWAITED WORLD DEBUT ON RALLY SPAIN

Neil Simpson will start his very first World Rally Championship event later this month in Spain – an opportunity he says he's "hugely grateful" for.

Simpson will drive his own Skoda Fabia Rally2 evo which will be run by Toksport and is registered for the WRC3 category. Despite rising through the rallying ranks in the British Rally Championship throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, Simpson has never even done Rally GB before.

Simpson told MN: "I always ended up doing gravel notes for somebody or being involved in some other way throughout my career in my early days when I was allegedly quite good at this. So it's always eluded me, the opportunity to compete on a WRC event.

"I remember when I was driving for Volkswagen in 2001, which was a bloody long time ago, we went out to Catalunya with a view to competing in the WRC the following year, but I didn't think it was going to take me 20 years to get there!

"I've always wanted to do Spain, it's a rally I've been very fond of as an onlooker and working with various people in WRC over the past couple of years," he added. "Serkan Duru from Toksport, he's made it happen for me, I'm hugely grateful for that. I feel very honoured and very privileged, and I just can't wait to get going."

Simpson hasn't competed since the Condroz Rally in Belgium two years ago and hasn't sat in a rally car since then either. His expectations are therefore measured, hoping simply to complete the event and enjoy himself. However Simpson is keen to get out more in 2022.

"I would like to do a programme of sorts next year, probably somewhere in Europe. Whether that's an ERC campaign, limited WRC or what, I really don't know at this stage," he said. "I'm 50 years old next year and it would be a nice way to celebrate being 50 going to do a few rallies wouldn't it?

Simpson's last outing was on the Condroz Rally in 2019

Jackson has equipped himself with a Ford Fiesta R2T

JACKSON TARGETS A FULL RALLYING YEAR IN 2022 WITH NEW FIESTA R2T

Matthew Jackson will complete his first proper season of rallying in six years in 2022, acquiring a Ford Fiesta R2T .

Jackson, who turns 30 next year, sold his Subaru Impreza N12 earlier this year and has been working on sourcing an R2 car ever since.

The driver is still uncertain of his exact programme ahead of next season. He said: "[The car is] still homologated which was one of the biggest positives, it opens up so much more opportunity.

"I want to try some more closed-roads stuff as I did the Jim Clark Rally a few times in a little Micra and I thought it was ace, and then Jonathan [Jackson, brother] and Meirion [Evans] are having a pretty good run of things at the moment, so when we sit back and watch the in-car the closed-road stuff does look pretty good.

"But it's trying to work out if I should do a year in the forests [instead] because that's what I know and [we can] see what we can do, because the R2 world is a bit more of a level playing field than the B13 world so it's an opportunity to see what pace I've actually got. One way or another it's going to be a full calendar of events next year, that is the goal."

Jackson will test his new car on gravel soon ahead of a possible entry on Grizedale Stages in early December.

BELL SKIPS MULL RALLY BUT ISN'T DONE WITH JUNIOR BRC

Junior British Rally Championship contender Ruairi Bell won't make the trip to Mull this week for round five of the series but insists he hasn't necessarily given up on the JBRC.

Bell had been fighting eventual winner William Creighton for Trackrod Rally Yorkshire victory recently before a driveshaft broke on his Ford Fiesta Rally4 and restricted him to sixth. He had also suffered a driveshaft issue in testing in the lead-up to the event and retired from the lead of the Grampian Forest Rally with a mechanical issue too.

The 21-year-old had entered Mull but will now skip it in order to make sure the car is fully prepared for future events.

"It's a bit of a shame," Bell told MN. "We joked about it all along at the beginning of the season that it could come down to whose car lasts, but I'm not laughing as much about that now. I'm not finished in the championship necessarily, I'm just not going to Mull at the moment.

"I think it's clear for everybody to see that the [chance of] winning [the title] is not there," he added, "but the internal goal of the team this season was to get as much experience as possible which we have done over the last three or four events. We've got to always look at the positives. Obviously we want to win but we are still winning in many ways."

Ruairi Bell is planning to regroup before his rally return

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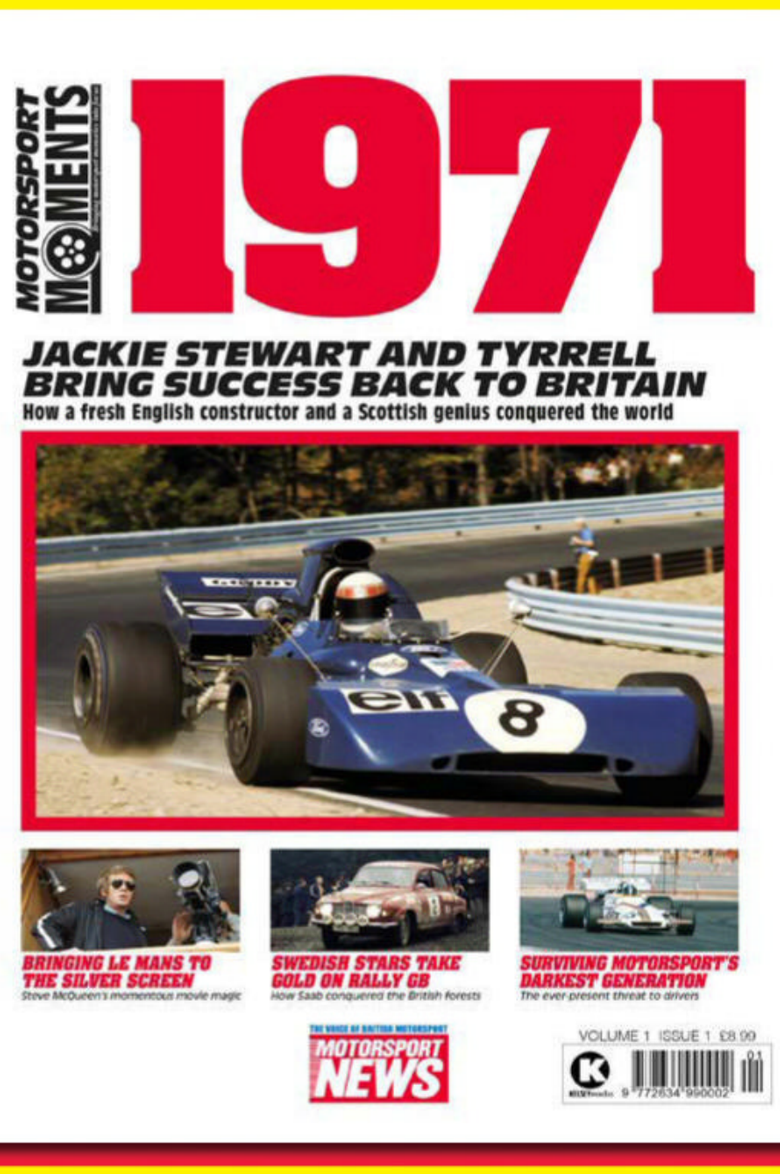
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RALLY NEWS

DONEGAL HARVEST RALLY: BY MARTIN WALSH — OCTOBER 3

DEVINE SPINS AND WINS ON DONEGAL HARVEST

Ford Fiestas fill the four top places as Irish asphalt stars tackle the classic Donegal event

Photos: William Neil, Red Bull Content Pool

Top seed Callum Devine had an anxious wait for his rivals at the end of the sixth and final stage of the Donegal Harvest Rally after a half spin. However, the Derry man's concern was ill-founded as he secured a 9.7-second victory over local hero Declan Boyle. Sam Moffett (Fiesta R5) was 36.3s further behind in third.

Boyle, reverting to his Fiesta WRC instead of his scheduled outing in a VW Polo GTi R5, was fastest through the opening stage taking a 2.7s lead over Devine with Gary Jennings' right-hand-drive Fiesta R5 1.9s further behind. Keeping up with the modern machinery in fourth was Chris Armstrong (Escort), who led the modified category.

On SS2, Devine topped the time sheets to lead Jennings by 2.9s while Boyle had brake issues and slid into a drain that ripped the rear spoiler off.

On the repeat stages, Devine and Boyle traded stage times while Jennings slid down to 34th when he beached his Fiesta on a hedge. He recovered to finish 20th.

On the penultimate stage, heavy rain showers cleared and Boyle trimmed the deficit to 3.8s but admitted that he should have opted for a fresh set of tyres, handing Devine enough leeway on the final stage to clinch the spoils. Moffett came home third from the constantly improving Cathan McCourt (Fiesta R5) with Josh Moffett (Hyundai i20 R5) and Donagh Kelly (VW Polo) completing the top six.

The rest of the top 10 featured Seamus Leonard (Ford Focus WRC), Daniel Cronin (Fiesta R5), Niall Maguire (Subaru WRC) and Aidan Wray (Fiesta R5).

Kevin Eves (Toyota Corolla) was best of the modified category – finishing 18.2s ahead of Gary Kiernan (Escort). Daniel Breslin (Escort) was third while early leader Armstrong (Escort) broke a driveshaft on the startline of the final stage.

Donegal Harvest Rally
Organiser: Donegal Motor Club **When:** October 3
Where: Donegal **Stages:** 6 **Starters:** 133

Results
1 Callum Devine/Brian Hoy (Ford Fiesta R5) 43m. 15.6s; 2 Declan Boyle/James O'Reilly (Ford Fiesta WRC) +9.7s; 3. Sam Moffett/Keith Moriarty (Ford Fiesta R5) +46.0s; 4. Cathan McCourt/Liam Moynihan (Ford Fiesta R5) +1m02.3s; 5. Josh Moffett/Andy Hayes (Hyundai i20 R5) +1m03.1s; 6. Donagh Kelly/Kevin Flanagan (VW Polo GTi R5) +1m05.1s; 7. Seamus Leonard/John McCaffrey (Ford Focus WRC) +1m38.9s; 8. Daniel Cronin/Shane Buckley (Ford Fiesta R5) +2m13.2s; 9. Niall Maguire/Conor Foley (Subaru WRC) +2m17.3s; 10. Aidan Wray/Kieran McGrath (Ford Fiesta R5) +2m41.2s.

Devine gave his all to secure Donegal victory

MN SERIES CHIEF TO BTRDA ASPHALT JOB

Spann:moves

The BTRDA has appointed Darren Spann as Protyre Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally Championship Manager from 2022, following the retirement of Jane Evans.

Having managed the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship since its inception seven years ago, Spann has also been Clerk of the Course for the Neil Howard Stages Rally since 2012 and hosted the opening round of the 2021 British Rally Championship.

Mike Broad, president of the BTRDA, commented: "I would like to say a very big thank you to Jane for all her hard work over the past few years, she has been a delight to work with. I am delighted that we have appointed Darren and I am certain that he, with his team, will develop the Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally Championship even further."

ROAD RALLY ROUND-UP

Jones and Swain scoop Clitheronian honours

On paper Iwan Jones/Ryan Swain seemed to have taken a comfortable win on the Clitheronian Rally, however they had to overcome delays and only took the lead with two sections to go.

The well-received road rally used some classic roads, including the Trough of Bowland and Gisburn Forest; sections that had been unavailable for some time due to PR issues.

The fastest crew of the night were Kevin Kerr/Max Freeman. With over three-quarters of the event run, they held a lead of almost three minutes, but then the driver became unwell and they had to cut route to the finish.

Jones/Swain had been held up by a non-competing vehicle on an early section and then spent nine minutes extracting top seeds Ben Briant/Gary Evans from a ditch. A number of crews were held up here and the section was scrubbed. This allowed Jones/Swain to take the win, a first overall victory for Swain.

The runner-up spot was taken by Dan Sedgwick/Callum Lambert, on what was the navigator's first-ever rally. Bevan Blacker/Niall Frost finished third, Frost having hot footed his way to the Clitheronian after he'd secured first place on the Tour of Cheshire.

Ian Mills

Results
Clitheronian Rally
Organiser: Clitheroe & District Motor Club **When:** September 25-26 **Where:** Lancashire **Championships:** ANWCC EMAMC ANEMMC SD34MSG **Route:** 140 miles **Starters:** 48.
1 Iwan Jones/Ryan Swain (Ford Escort) 10m13s; 2 Dan Sedgwick/Callum Lambert (Peugeot 106 Rallye) +1m44s; 3 Bevan Blacker/Niall Frost (Peugeot 106); 4 Tim Hodgson/Sam Spencer (Escort); 5 Matthew Jones/Osian Davies (Ford Focus ST170); 6 Danny Cowell/Paul Holmberg (Subaru Impreza); 7 Steve Cotton/Rob Cotton (Impreza); 8 Chris Farrell/Andrew Lowe (BMW Compact); 9 Adrian Green/Ian Gibbins (Proton Satria); 10 David Stubbs/Terry Martin (Renault Clio).
Class Winners: Experts: Cotton/Cotton; **Semi-Experts:** Tom Fenton/John Harper (Peugeot 205 GTi); **Novices:** Ryan Tubman/David Tubman (Proton Persona).

POKERSTARS RALLY: BY NICK GARTON — OCTOBER 1-2

PRITCHARD DELIVERS MANX MASTERCLASS

Rallying returned to the Isle of Man with the Pokerstars Rally with a dramatic and attritional event being claimed by Welshman Jason Pritchard in his Ford Focus WRC05 co-driven by Phil Clarke.

With a margin of victory measuring 5mins 20.9secs, Pritchard is now firmly in contention for this year's Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally Championship title.

Pritchard's win adds to the five Manx National and two IOM Historic trophies already on his mantelpiece. Rain lashed the event and brought with it considerable misfortune, with the Skoda Fabia R5 of David Campling/James Ducker taking a considerable hit early on, resulting in a precautionary hospital visit for Ducker.

Championship leader Melvyn Evans was another early casualty after hitting a bridge and breaking a wheel on his Skoda Fabia R5+. Another frontrunning Skoda, that of Damian Cole, also went out after a heavy impact with an earth bank which ended with the car wedged across the road as Cole and co-driver Andrew Roughead sought to warn oncoming crews.

Pritchard's victory hoists him eight places to third in the overall drivers' standings with the two drivers ahead of him needing to drop a score.

"The conditions were tricky, it certainly added to the challenge, but it's proper Manx isn't it?," said the delighted winner.

RESULTS

Pokerstars Rally

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Jason Pritchard/Phil Clarke	Ford Focus WRC	1hr 28m 55.2s
2	Mark Kelly/Neil Colman	Ford Fiesta R5	+5m 20.9s
3	Damian Toner/Denver Rafferty	Ford Escort Mk2	+6m 12.6s
4	Steve Colley/Kirsty Duke	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+6m 29.0s
5	John Stone/Tom Woodburn	Volkswagen Polo GTi R5	+7m 35.2s
6	Steven Ormond-Smith/Adam Yates	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+8m 18.1s
7	Neil Roskell/Matthew Daniels	Ford Fiesta R5	+8m 56.6s
8	Rory McCann/Sion Williams	Honda Civic EG6	+8m 58.6s
9	Will Rowlands/Rich Birch	Ford Escort Mk2	+9m41.2s
10	Martin Toner/Ben Teggart	BMW E87	+10m 10.9s

Class winners: B1: William Mains/Sion Jones (Vauxhall Nova); **B2:** Kevin McLaughlin/Conal McNulty (Honda Civic); **B3:** Simon Summers/John Dilwyn (Ford Escort Mk2); **B4:** McCann/Williams; **B5:** Toner/Rafferty; **B6:** Colley/Duke; **B7:** Pritchard/Clarke; **B8:** Kelly/Colman; **H1:** David Mylchreest/Allan Cathers (MGB); **H2:** Ray Cunningham/Jared Gill (Mini 1275 GT); **H3:** Rowlands/Birch **H4:** Ronan Campbell/Ciaran McAnespy (Ford Escort Mk2)

SPEED HEADS CANNY SUBARU LOCK-OUT IN MINNESOTA NITRO RX

Former Toro Rosso Formula 1 driver Scott Speed took victory in the second round of the Nitro Rallycross series at the ERX Motor Park in Minnesota to claim the joint series lead.

The Subaru Motorsports USA squad dominated the event, controversially electing not to competitively complete all of the running in the bracket sessions on day one, to ensure that its drivers ended up in different heat races on Sunday. By winning their respective heats, Speed and series-founding team-mate Travis Pastarana both made it through to the final, while the third Subari of Norway's Andreas Bakkerud joined the pair at the front of the grid. In the 10-car final, Speed led from the front, while Pastarana initially dropped to fifth but executed a multi-corner pass on Kevin Hansen for second during a thrilling encounter. Hansen eventually wound up third, with brother Timmy fourth, Jamaican Fraser McConnell fifth and Swede Robin Larsson sixth.

British drivers Liam Doran and Oliver Bennett went out in the last chance qualifier, while British driver Catie Munnings made her debut in the Side-By-Side class, which was won by Tanner Foust.

Speed was on top for Subaru

NORWEGIAN ACE GETS TICKET TO SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS FINALE

Former World Rallycross driver Andreas Bakkerud will compete in the European Rallycross Championship final this weekend with the ES Motorsport team.

The Norwegian lies second in the European standings, just two points behind leader Fabian Pailler. Having signed for Subaru Motorsports USA for the opening two rounds of the Nitro Rallycross campaign in the US, it was unclear if Bakkerud would be able to contest the Euro RX finale at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium, but for the second time this season he will take over Czech driver Ales Fucik's entry. "I think every driver that raced in that first event at Spa is pumped to be back," he said.

"It's an awesome track and I'm going there to race for the Euro RX1 title in an epic battle with Fabien, Andrea Dubourg and [team-mate] Janis Baumanis."

Spa beckons for Andreas Bakkerud

HISTORICS

DOWN THE PUB

HARRY PHELPS

Racing newcomer
Age: 24 **Lives:** Crawley

Phelps is a racing newcomer

He only started racing in May
"I only started racing this season. So I've done the two Historic Touring Car Championship races at Silverstone Grand Prix in May, the one on the Brands Hatch GP circuit in July and two at the Oulton Park Gold Cup. I did a bit of karting when I was a lot younger."

He's racing a Ford Anglia
"My dad Mark built Bob Bullen's Anglia back in the day. So I've been involved with that since I was born. It's all to do with Bob's racing and my dad still looks after Bob's Lotus Cortina. Bob had the Anglia that I'm now racing as a road car. I bought it from Bob when I was 17 and then my dad stripped it and we rebuilt it as a road car. Then last year, I decided I wanted to race it so we had to rebuild it again."

He's an engine builder
"It's now got a 1600cc downdraught pre-crossflow Ford engine. My dad's done most of the work on it and I've done all the engine work. I'm a machinist and fabricator at Swiftune Engineering, so it would probably have been easier to build a Mini."

He goes sideways
"It's been going well and I'm told my style is spectacular. In some places I probably need to calm down a bit and I've got quite a bit of work to do on consistency. It's exciting to watch and I enjoy driving so I'm pushing. I was a bit more careful at Oulton Park during the Gold Cup because it's a bit more of a technical circuit and a bit unforgiving."

His pace is good
"The races at Oulton Park were only my fourth and fifth ever races and I was seventh and eighth overall and second in class to Neil Wood's Anglia. I really love it. We run the car alongside Bob's Cortina so dad's even busier on the pitwall now. Obviously he looks after Bob's car first and I'll sort my own car out unless there is a big issue."

More is planned
"We will finish this season and then do some more. We've got the Silverstone Finals this month when I'll get rid of my novice cross on the back. And then next year the plan is a full season."

Photos: Paul Lawrence

Classic rally machines take on Weston Park

STARS AND CARS TO GRACE RALLY REVIVAL EVENT

Burns and Vatanen's World championships to be celebrated in Wrexham

By Paul Lawrence

Around 100 rally cars, most from before 2002, will tackle this year's Rally Revival, which run from a base in Wrexham on Friday and Saturday October 15-16.

The demonstration event ran successfully in February 2020 and was moved back in this year's calendar due to Covid.

The event will mark 20 years since Richard Burns won the World Rally Championship and 40 years since Ari Vatanen achieved the same feat.

Spectators will be welcome at Weston Park in Shropshire on Saturday when visits from the Rally Revival cars will fit around the concurrent Speed and Rally Show. The show will run all day, interspersed by several visits from the rally cars.

The rally start in Wrexham will mark the first time in nearly 20 cars that rallying has been in the town.

The cars and crews will be based at the Ty Pawb Arts centre and will be flagged away from the nearly Queens Square in the town centre.

The field of 100 cars includes British champion Dai Llewellyn in a Toyota Celica GT4, former BTRDA frontrunner Luke Francis in an Audi Quattro and Richard Gough in his ex-Ari Vatanen Ford Escort Mk2, now back resplendent in Rothmans livery.

Kevin Proctor is due to bring an ex-Richard Burns Subaru Impreza WRC. Gaggles of Ford Escorts, Lancia Stratos and Ford RS200 replicas, Lancia Delta Integrales and Triumph TR7 V8s pack out the entry.

Event director Bryn Pierce said: "With stunning venues for this second running, the entrants will be in for a treat."

Bailey and Young's Escort has a famous livery for the R.A.C. bid

Iconic livery for R.A.C. Ford Escort

Experienced race and rally driver Jerry Bailey and co-driver Sinclair Young will contest the Roger Albert Clark in their rebuilt Ford Escort Mk2 carrying the British Airways livery from Bjorn Waldegard's 1977 RAC Rally victory.

Bailey had the car totally rebuilt for the Silver Fern Rally in New Zealand last year, but when that event was cancelled the car stood unrallied until the recent Trackrod Rally.

"I thought that livery was just right to go to New Zealand," said Hampshire-based Bailey. "I'd only tested it once since the rebuild and the Trackrod was our shakedown before the Roger Albert Clark in November. It's got a fresh David Gathercole BDG engine."

Historic rally title down to the wire

The destiny of the British Historic Rally Championship will be decided on the third and final round of the season, the Carlisle Stages on Saturday October 23.

Contrary to the information supplied to MN after the Trackrod Historic Cup, Nick Elliott and Dave Price (Ford Escort Mk2) are not yet title winners.

The contest, where Ben Friend and Cliffy Simmons are the key rivals to Price and Elliott, will be resolved later this month. More than 100 entries have already been placed for Carlisle, which brings the Scottish and British Historic Championships together.

Friend still has a shot at crown

LECKIE AND OUTHWAITE CLAIM HERO CHALLENGE SILVERWARE

Alistair Leckie and Matt Outhwaite (Saab 900) have been confirmed as HERO Challenge champions in only their first year of regularity rallying following HERO Challenge Three recently. Overall victory on the Bicester-based event went to Paul Bloxidge who was co-driven by his 15-year-old grandson Oli Waldock in their VW Golf GTi. Oil becomes the youngest ever winner of such an event.

Southport to echo to the sound of engines

Classic competition cars will feature in the inaugural Southport Classic and Speed in the Lancashire town on Sunday.

The event has been organised to celebrate the 1903 Southport Speed Trials.

During the day, up to 250 veteran, vintage, classic and modern cars from three centuries of motoring will be on display in the town's Victoria Park, including a rare Gladiator similar to the car raced to a class win in 1903 by pioneering female motorist Dorothy Levitt. It will be the first time a car of that make has appeared in Southport since the landmark event 118 years ago.

Also on hand will be a 1936 Ford V8 that finished the Peking to Paris Challenge and a Jaguar D-type. The day will conclude with parade of cars through Southport from 1730hrs along Lord Street and the Promenade.

IN BRIEF

Bean is back
Although the Covid-impacted 2020 rallying season was his first without competing on an event for 62 years, Bob Bean is now preparing to tackle the Roger Albert Clark Rally again in November. The veteran Yorkshireman, now 83, has been rallying since 1960 and says he has every intention of carrying on.

Bumper HSCC
The Historic Sports Car Club has taken over 200 entries for its Silverstone Finals Meeting on October 16-17, despite a clash with the Goodwood Members' Meeting. Several championships are still to be decided including Historic Formula Ford, 70s Road Sports and Classic Formula Ford. The event will feature 20 races across two days.

Anglia rebuild
After 47 years in dry storage, a sprint and hillclimb Ford Anglia is being assessed with a view to restoration. The Lotus twin-cam engined Anglia was last used by Cornish couple Peter and Juliet Johns in the 1974 Castrol/BARC Hillclimb Championship and has been dormant ever since. The car is now with Andrew Honey at Peninsula Historic Motorsport with a view to getting Juliet back in the car on speed events in the south-west.

Kirby ready for R.A.C.
Suffolk rally driver David Kirby is building up towards the Roger Albert Clark Rally in his Ford Escort Mk1 and will warm up by rallying in Kielder for the first time in seven years on the Carlisle Stages. His long trek north is part of a three-event lead in to the five-day epic, which has already taken in the Nicky Grist and Trackrod rallies.

Title hots up
The Motorsport News HRCR Clubmans Challenge will be settled this weekend on the final round, the Matlock Motor Club Dansport Historic Rally in the Peak District on Saturday evening and Sunday. The key title contenders are Dan Willan (Volvo PV544) and Paul Crosby (Porsche 911) from a capacity 60-car field that includes around 13 previous HRCR event winners.

Trials for VSCC
The Vintage Sports-Car Club's very popular trials season will start this weekend with the Welsh Trial, based on Presteigne in the Welsh borders. Traditionally, hills run through Saturday afternoon and resume on Sunday morning. The winter season of trials for Pre-War cars usually runs over six or seven events through until March but was decimated last winter by the Covid lockdowns.

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Toyota man doubles up as Sutton zeroes in on BTCC crown P28
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Landmark result for Merc's star as he denies Norris a maiden win
LEWIS HAILS A MAGICAL MOMENT AS HE HITS A CENTURY
By Matt James
Lewis Hamilton has hailed his rivals after landing his 100th grand prix win in Russia on Sunday, snatching the victory from fellow Brit Lando Norris.
From pole position, McLaren man Norris seemed set to take his maiden victory until a late rain shower left him slithering off the circuit. Hamilton had been called in by his Mercedes team and swapped tyres. He was able to hunt down Norris and take the race win in the dying moments.
Hamilton, who finished one place ahead of his title rival Max Verstappen, says the 100-win benchmark is something he finds hard to believe.
The seven-time champion said: "It's a magical moment. I could only ever have dreamed of still being here and having this opportunity to win these races and get to drive against such phenomenal talent this late in my career and to continue to building with Mercedes. I'm so proud of everything we've done, not only on track but also off."
Full report, p4
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Lewis has achieved his big target
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COLUMNIST

MATT JAMES

MN editor crunches the numbers ahead of the BTCC's meeting at Donington

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

Sutton sits on top of the pile

Ingram was a winner at Donington for Toyota

The mixed up running order of the British Touring Car Championship has given something of a different complexion to the battle for the big prize, but the fight for the most prestigious trophy in UK motorsport is more than likely to come down to a final meeting shootout at Brands Hatch at the end of this month.

Before then, the machines head to Donington Park this weekend for the dress rehearsal for Finals Day. Donington is usually the second meeting of the campaign in April but the shuffle means that the historic track will have a bigger influence on the outcome.

Ash Sutton brings his Laser Tools Racing Infiniti Q50 to the East Midlands track with a very healthy 36-point buffer at the top of the charts. It is possible for him to win a third crown this weekend, but it would take something very drastic to happen to those who are chasing.

Sutton will be licking his lips at the prospect of Donington Park. It was the scene of his maiden win in the Infiniti in 2020 – although that success has been his only at the venue since his BTCC debut in 2016.

However, over the last five meetings at Donington, Sutton has never been outside the points and has an average finishing position that outstrips any of those in with a realistic shot at the 2021 crown. His average spot is 6.5, which narrowly eclipses the man who is second in the standings, Tom Ingram.

Ingram's average finishing position is 6.7 over the last five meetings at the track. This year, armed with the Excelr8 Motorsport Trade Price Cars Racing Hyundai i30 N, he will be aiming for similar figures to keep the pressure up. While Sutton has only won once at Donington, Ingram has appeared on the top step three times. He has not finished outside the top 15 in any of his last 12 races at the track.

It is perhaps unfair to line up similar statistics for MB Motorsport man Jake Hill, who has only been in a competitive car for the last two seasons – and last year was a nadir for the team when the Honda Civic was blighted by electrical problems. It makes his average finishing spot of 16th unrepresentative.

Turkington will look forward to Donington Park

Josh Cook has an outside shot at the BTCC title

Then we get to four-time champion Colin Turkington. While he would have been delighted to win the third race at Silverstone last time out in his WSR BMW 330i M Sport, he would have been even more pleased when the points were totted up afterwards. He is only four marks away from Ingram in second place in the standings, but because he is fourth in the table, he will carry almost 20kg less of success ballast than the Hyundai man. His four wins at Donington have helped him to an average finish of 7.15 but three wins in the last two seasons in the saloon-shaped German car mean he is perhaps the form man going into this weekend.

The other realistic title shot – and one that has perhaps gone under the radar – is BTC Racing Honda Civic Type R man Josh Cook. It was at Donington in 2015 when his light properly began to shine in the BTCC and it is a track he won at in 2018. His average finishing spot of 7.3 might need to be bettered over the three races this weekend to keep himself in with a shout.

Those are the bare statistics, but of course anything can happen in the BTCC. Perhaps the most significant factor in Sutton's favour – aside from the points that are already in his pocket – is the increased recent performance of team-mate Aiden Moffat. The Scot enjoyed his best BTCC weekend year with a win and a second place at Croft and was strong again at Silverstone last time out. Moffat – along with Turkington's team-mates Tom Oliphant and Stephen Jelley – could be the most important drivers in the run-in to this year's crown.

Then factor in success ballast and reversed grid. Also, don't discount the weather at this time of year. And then, don't forget this is the BTCC. This battle has plenty of life left in it yet.

"Turkington would have been happy when he saw the latest points' table"

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

WHY KENT-ENGINED FORMULA FORD IS LITERALLY ON THE RISE

Using Kent-engined Formula Fords in hillclimbing is becoming popular. Paul Lawrence takes a look at the burgeoning cut-price single-seater class

Teenager Tom Morgan is one of the leading FF1600 lights

Champion Trevor Willis has been tempted into the Formula Ford class

The great thing about old Formula Fords is that they never go out of date and there are many options to keep them in action. The Historic Championship looks after the early cars from the start of the category in 1967 up to the end of 1971 and the Classic Championship takes the story forward a decade to the start of the 1980s.

Then the Heritage class comes in for cars through to 1993 and the end of the Kent era which, in period, was before the unloved Zetec engine took over in the prime national championship. There is little appetite for running a Zetec as a period car but, instead, the Kents have a perpetual life in racing and hundreds of cars are still active in the UK alone, including in the regional championships.

However, there is a growing number of Kents that are finding their way into going uphill fast. The Formula Ford class in hillclimbing is growing and growing. The rules are simple: take any period FF1600 from up to 1994, fit a timing strut on the front nosecone and away you go. It's as simple as that.

The Formula Ford class in hillclimbing runs at most events and championships and the hugely popular Midland Hill Climb Championship has a dedicated class for them at nine events across the hill climb season at Shelsley Walsh, Loton Park and Prescott.

With most sprints and hillclimbs now accommodating Formula Ford 1600s it's not difficult to see why they are becoming an increasingly popular choice for those seeking to hillclimb a single-seater.

Generally, bespoke hillclimb single-seaters now come in two key varieties. The top end cars are V8-engined rocket ships that compete for the British Hillclimb Championship. They are incredibly high-tech machines, with hugely powerful 600bhp-plus engines and all sorts of electronic gizmos and gadgets. This is the top of hillclimbing and the cost of owning and running these stunning cars is suitably high.

Then, there are the smaller capacity classes, notably for 1100cc, 1600cc and two-litre cars. Though former F3 cars are still around, these classes are now predominantly the domain of purpose-built single-seaters from specialist manufacturers like OMS, GWR, Empire and Gould running remarkably effective motorbike-based engines. The Suzuki Hayabusa is the most popular choice, sometimes supercharged and sometimes turbocharged, but always very quick and immensely competitive in each capacity class.

But there is a third way and that's to take a Formula Ford car from the circuits and go hillclimbing. The appeals are obvious and drivers running in the Formula Ford class report that tyres will last for at least three seasons. Similarly, engines are good for three seasons and more, with little more attention needed than a change of oil over the winter. Running costs really are pushed down to a minimum.

Considering that the class covers cars spanning 27 years of Formula Ford development from 1967 to 1994, from a Lotus 51 to a Swift SC93K, the competition is fierce and close. Remarkably, the older cars stand up very well against the later machines and a well driven 1970s car will often be competitive against a 1992 Van Diemen. Some drivers say that the more pliable chassis in the older cars are actually better suited for the rigours of hillclimbing.

Rare Formula Fords regularly seen on the hills include the 1969 Pringett Mistrale of Les Buck and the similar-aged Nike Mk4 used by Carole Nicholls, daughter of Nike creator Ken Nicholls. Nikki Cottrill, meanwhile, has recently started doing some Historic Formula Ford racing in the Lotus 61 she also uses on the hills.

While there are season-long competitions to be had in a range of championships, two or three events have grown into a dedicated Formula Ford Challenge as a focus for Formula Fords, with three rounds this year taking in the hills of Gurston Down and Loton Park and a sprint at Curborough. These three events encourage the FF1600s to come together and entries of up to 25 cars are becoming the norm.

Two of the prime movers behind the category are Charlie Reilly who campaigns a Van Diemen RF92 and Paul Morcom who has an early Merlyn Mk11. Living in Eye in Suffolk, Reilly

Photos: Paul and Ben Lawrence

Sarah Bosworth campaigns a Van Diemen RF85 on the hills

Willis says hustling an FF1600 is a busy job

The Weavers have tackled the British Hillclimb Cup

Nikki Cottrill has progressed from hillclimbing to historic racing

is not ideally placed for hillclimbing, but loves the chance to tackle hills like Loton.

"The intention of the challenge is to get as many Formula Fords as possible together three times a year," says Reilly. "We do other events as well but come together for these three events. We think three rounds for the challenge is optimum as it allows people to do other events and championships. A lot of our people do the Midland Hill Climb Championship as well. It all started from the Formula Ford 50th anniversary year in 2017 with a sprint at Snetterton and a hillclimb at Gurston."

By keeping entirely in step with the Formula Ford 1600 racing regulations, they ensure that cars can readily move between the two disciplines and BHC contender Alex Summers raced his father Richard's Van Diemen RF80 in the Classic FF1600 races at the 2020 Oulton Park Gold Cup.

"It's a good easy car to run and you could race it as well if you wanted to," confirms Reilly. "Tyres will probably do two or three seasons and I do an engine refresh once every three or four years. Brake pads will last two years! It's the most affordable way into hillclimbing in a single-seater and the old cars can be just as quick as the later cars as they tend to be softer and more compliant."

The Summers Van Diemen has also been handled by three-time British Hillclimb champion Trevor Willis, best known for his attacking style at the pinnacle of hillclimbing in his 3.2-litre V8 OMS 28.

He reports: "The Formula Ford is fantastic fun to drive and is almost the exact opposite of my car. You're just as busy, but busy in a different way. There is a lack of downforce and it is all about being gentle and smooth and keeping the balance. The cars are easy to run and maintain and if you have a problem, someone will usually have a spare. It is a brilliant entry-level category and it is always fairly close. It's the perfect way to start in single-seaters on the hills."

At a different level in the experience ranks is Laurence Marks, who runs a Van Diemen RF84, a car seldom seen on the circuits these days. In period his chassis was run by the Silverstone-based British Racing Prospects team. "I went to the Formula Ford Festival as a kid and thought it was unattainable," says Marks. "There were only two or three Formula Fords competing on the hills when I bought my car and it suddenly went from nothing to this." By the time Marks had completed a three-year rebuild of the RF84 he was ready for the first festival at Gurston Down when his was one of 17 cars entered.

Hillclimb mods are minimal

"These car were designed for 18-year-olds but some of us are pensioners and some are kids!," says Marks. "The good news is that Ken Thorogood at Universal Racing Services has all the spares for Van Diemens. The running costs are pretty minimal for a racing car and I've just about run the engine in after three years. A season of competition for me is probably around 50 miles in total."

As well as contesting the Formula Ford Challenge this season, Ludlow-based father-and-son Richard and Tom Weaver have run their Van Diemen RF91 in the British Hillclimb Cup this year, the class-based competition that runs alongside the British Hillclimb Championship at all the mainland events. To his great credit, Tom ended the year as runner-up to overall champion Wallace Menzies in the Cup points.

"The class is close - and has some nice people in it"

Sarah Bosworth

"It's a great way in: if you can drive one of these, you can drive most things," says Richard. They have done two seasons on one set of tyres and their shared car is doing twice as much work. "The DIY man can do the maintenance and all events have Formula Ford classes. We're having so much fun in this, it's unreal."

Tom Weaver, 18, has ambitions to move up the hillclimb single-seater ladder and is hoping to use his Formula Ford pace as a springboard. He reckons an outlay of £10,000 to £12,000 is needed for a decent FF1600. Their RF91 came as a box of bits from Northern Ireland.

The irrepressible Sarah Bosworth has joint ownership of a Van Diemen RF85 with Lindsey Summers. On her other weekends, Lindsey shares the fearsome IndyCar-engined DJ Firestorm that her son Alex has just taken to second place in the British Hillcllimb Championship.

"The Formula Ford class is usually really close and with nice people," says Bosworth, who also runs a Lotus Elise on the hills. "Our Van Diemen RF85 is an ex-North Western Championship race car and it's been raced all its life. The previous driver was 6ft4 tall, so we had to make a few changes! When it's wet it is so much easier to manage than the Lotus Elise I've been using. I've still got the Elise and I think driving the Formula Ford will make me a better driver in the Elise." Her husband Mick Greenhough runs it from their garage at home. "You can't spend a lot of money because the regulations don't allow you to. You'll spend £10-15,000 for a good one. You can buy one, use it and sell it for the same money."

Proof that Formula Ford's appeal to young drivers is as strong as ever comes from teenagers Tom Morgan and Alex Coles, who have recently shared Morgan's Van Diemen RF89. Their respective dads, Stephen and Neil, are old mates from competing against each other in 1600cc single-seaters, so it made good sense for the lads to share the RF89 for their start in the sport.

Plymouth-based Alex was 17 at the end of May and made his competition debut at Loton Park in August. Tom from Oswestry was 16 on July 9 and made his debut at the same venue on July 10-11, having got his competition licence on his 16th birthday.

"I built it with Tom as soon as he was old enough," said Stephen Morgan. "We built the car with this Challenge in mind. He was hands on with the build and everyone has been very supportive of the lads." Tom, who has plans to move to more powerful single-seaters in due course, used his hands-on work during the rebuild the Formula Ford to help him earn an apprenticeship with a major motor manufacturer.

With a massive pool of available and affordable cars, ranging from immaculate race-ready cars to basket case restoration projects, it seems clear that racing Formula Fords uphill is only going to get more and more popular. ■

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

ENTER THE DRAGON: EVANS CLAIMS HISTORIC FINLAND WIN

Welsh hero dominates a thrilling three-way battle on Finland's 70th anniversary, by Nick Garton

Evans's win reignites this year's title battle

Rovanpera carried huge hopes

RESULTS

World Rally Championship round 10/12
Event: Rally Finland **Where:** Jyvaskyla, Finland **When:** October 1-3

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Elfyn Evans/Scott Martin	Toyota Yaris WRC	2h19m13.7s
2	Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+14.1s
3	Craig Breen/Paul Nagle	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+42.2s
4	Esapekka Lappi/Jonne Ferm	Toyota Yaris WRC	+58.8s
5	Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia	Toyota Yaris WRC	+2m54.4s
6	Gus Greensmith/Chris Patterson	Ford FiestaWRC	+5m02.3s
7	Adrien Fourmaux/Alexandre Coria	Ford Fiesta WRC	+6m22.9s
8	Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula	VW Polo GTI R5	+9m52.1s
9	Mads Ostberg/Torstein Eriksen	Citroen C3 Rally2	+10m07.8s
10	Emil Lindholm/Reeta Hamalainen	SKoda Fabia Rally2 Evo	+10m52.8s

WRC2: Suninen/Markkula; **WRC3:** Lindholm/Hamalainen. **Championship:** 1 Ogier 190; 2 Evans 166; 3 Neuville 130; 4 Rovanpera 129; 5 Tanak 128; 6 Breen 76, etc. **Next rally:** Rally Spain, October 14-17

Breen made his third consecutive WRC podium with confident drive

Britain's Elfyn Evans triumphed after an utterly thrilling three-way battle for victory on an historic weekend for the World Rally Championship. As God Save the Queen rang out over the Rally Finland podium, the host nation celebrated the 70th anniversary of its biggest sporting occasion, while after 25 seasons the last of the World Rally Cars made a spectacular farewell to the hallowed gravel stages around Jyvaskyla.

Somebody didn't see the memo. Autumn is the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, as every long-suffering English teacher attempts to drill into the psyche of their listless classes. John Keats knew all about autumn, its golden-brown hues and its beauty. Finland delivered an abundance of the above – but at a pace which simply took even seasoned veterans' breath away.

Finland lives and breathes the sport of rallying and all eyes were one of Jyvaskyla's own sons, Kalle Rovanpera, to deliver a fairytale anniversary gift to the nation. The Toyota star was typically unfazed and celebrated his 21st birthday on Friday, but on the streets of his hometown for the opening stage of the event it was another Jyvaskyla resident, his Japanese team-mate Takamoto Katsuta, who claimed the lead as the field went out into the forests.

At this point the rally changed complexion entirely and the pacesetters for the weekend immediately made the jump into hyperspace and left the rest of the WRC runners dumbfounded. Rovanpera was in the mix in fourth place, battling his new team-mate Esapekka Lappi and their sister Yaris WRC handled by Evans, who started brightly but faltered twice on the opening day and had to battle back past his Finnish colleagues.

Out in front, therefore, were two Hyundais: Ott Tanak taking the early initiative before being overhauled by Irish super-sub Craig Breen. Breen had appeared content with his form as he metaphorically sat on Tanak's boot lid throughout the opening five stages, but with SS6 being run in the dark the Estonian lacked confidence in his set-up, dropping 8 seconds and handing the lead to his delighted team-mate.

On Saturday morning, Tanak was still not at ease and Breen ably held the lead for two more stages. The man who was truly on a mission, however, was Evans. On the second stage of the morning, Paijala, he was fastest by 4.2s and added more than 3s over the Hyundais on the next test to cement himself at the leaderboard's top.

At the end of SS9, 6s separated Evans, Breen and Tanak, with Rovanpera hanging on grimly 12s further behind but, on the next stage, Finnish hopes were dashed against a very solid sandbank. Rovanpera lost the back end of his Yaris and both he and co-driver Jonne Halttunen were undoubtedly grateful that their car is so solidly constructed. They were safe, but they were out. He would soon be followed by Katsuta, suffering his third big shunt in three rallies.

Saturday was a nine-stage epic that would run through until nightfall. After the mid-point service halt, Tanak had got his i20 WRC in a happier fettle and he duly took off in the sort of form that netted him the 2019 World championship. He was fastest on the next three stages but, tellingly, for all the Estonian's exertions Evans dropped only 2s, then immediately took back 1.4s on the penultimate stage of the day and they tied on the night-time blast through Jyvaskyla.

On Sunday morning Tanak gave it one last push on the opening stage of the day to see if he could force Evans into an error. His time of 5m24.2s blitzed almost everyone in the field – all except for Evans, that was, who was just 0.4s behind him and still in the lead by 8.7s. The Welshman then won both of the next two stages, teeing himself up for an easy Powerstage run, if he so chose.

Evans did not choose to go gently, however, and his rationale for giving it his all to the finish line was very clear. His championship-leading team-mate Sebastien Ogier had an anonymous weekend in Finland, an event he has only won once, back in 2013 when the mighty advantage of the Volkswagen Polo WRC in its debut season gave him plenty of ammo.

This time around, Ogier was in damage-limitation mode from the outset; dropping as low as seventh on Saturday morning and only climbing back up to fifth at the finish after Rovanpera and the Hyundai of notional title rival Thierry Neuville went out. "Comme ci, comme ca," he told his French fans. It was what it was.

Neuville had to dominate in Finland and have both Ogier and Evans retire if the dying embers of his title challenge were to be rekindled. But, like Ogier, Neuville is not a Finland specialist and when his light pod fell off on Saturday evening it caused such damage to the Hyundai's cooling system that it was deemed too risky to drive onward.

Ogier took his run through the Powerstage and found his Yaris in

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Red Bull Content Pool

Points leader Ogier had an anonymous weekend by his standards watching Evans get back in the hunt

Lappi's return to Toyota brought tantalising promise but not a single stage win was claimed by a Finn

recalcitrant mood, cutting out repeatedly and dropping him out of the bonus points positions. Evans meanwhile claimed maximum bonus points from Tanak by a margin of 1.7s and thereby scythed the Frenchman's 44-point advantage down to just 24 with two events remaining.

Both are on asphalt, with Spain and Monza now confirmed as the final two rounds of this season, which is a surface that both men relish. It is a long shot but it is doable, and it is testament to Evans's determination that he is still in the fight.

Tanak was pleased with second, Breen cock-a-hoop with his third podium in as many events and Finland took solace from Lappi's fourth place on an event where the home drivers failed to record a single stage win. But the day belonged to Evans, quite rightly.

"This one feels good in the way that we managed to do it as well," the Welshman enthused. "Obviously we struggled a lot in Estonia… [but in Finland] we managed to take the fight to the Hyundai boys on Saturday, it feels pretty good now."

LINDHOLM KEEPS UP TRADITION

Skoda chose to celebrate its 120th anniversary in motorsport at the Ypres Rally, where its entrants were beaten in both of the Rally2 classes. In hindsight the Czech powerhouse should have spread its bets a little, because in Finland its Fabias were the class of WRC3, bringing home to the top four positions.

It was also another cause for Finnish celebration as Emil Lindholm took off from the start of the very first stage and was never headed. Lindholm, like Kalle Rovanpera, is the scion of a family steeped in rallying, being a cousin of Marcus Gronholm. Also, like Rovanpera and, in F1, Max Verstappen, he is the son of a driver who achieved much but never showed his full potential on the big stage – in this case former Peugeot man Sebastian Lindholm.

Lindholm dominated in WRC3

Seven wins out of the nine stages on Saturday proved how emphatic his victory was, finishing more than a minute clear of countryman Mikko Heikkila with another Finnish youngster, Lauri Joona, third. "What a feeling! It has been quite a rally," beamed the winner.

CELEBRATING A LANDMARK IN THE SCANDINAVIAN WAY

At times it felt a little as though Finland had blown the national budget and hired Marvel to conjure the 70th anniversary celebrations of its biggest sporting spectacle out of CGI. Maybe not in the Finn-free WRC podium, but certainly in the way that the nation's rally heritage was celebrated amid autumnal splendour.

You saw the video, right? The great heroes Finland's rallying past, gathered together at a log cabin and enjoying a chat while Mikko Hirvonen prepares the sauna. Then they all jump into their iconic cars to see who's still fastest through Ouninpohja. It's like The Avengers but gentler.

Before the WRC cars went out, the veterans ran the first stage. Father of the house on this occasion was Simo Lampinen, opting to take the co-driver's seat of his Saab 99. Timo Makinen's brother drove a Mini in tribute to the wild boy of sixties rallying, while Tommi Makinen put on an eye-popping display in his Mitsubishi Lancer Evo III.

Yet Finnish celebrations are a little… different. The old boys all talked more about the late Hannu Mikkola than themselves. When one bushy-tailed reporter asked Ari Vatanen for his defining memory of the event, it was a tale of how two children with genetic disorders, who lived beside the Myhinpaa stage, cheered him each year; but both died before the 1989 event. In an evil-handling Mitsubishi Galant that was miles off the pace, Vatanen won that stage to honour those two boys.

That's what rallying means in Finland. Everything.

Four-time World champion Makinen rolled back the years

SUNINEN MAKES HIS POINT WITH INDIE WRC2 VICTORY

WRC2 points leader Andreas Mikkelsen skipped the Finnish fixture in order to take part in the clashing European championship round, leaving Mads Ostberg with a good opportunity to make hay. The Citroen man faced the Hyundais of Jari Huttunen and Oliver Solberg, the Ford Fiestas of veteran Martin Prokop and youngster Tom Kristensson plus the intriguing prospect of Teemu Suninen in a VW Polo alongside the similar car of Nikolay Gryazin.

Service park scuttlebutt suggested that the Polo was the car to have, as the VW's architecture imbues it with more suspension travel than its rivals. Whether or not this was the case, Suninen came out of the gates raring to go, settling into second place with class leader Ostberg well within reach and enjoying a spirited battle with Gryazin.

On Friday's night-time stage, Ostberg's car started to make burning smells and dropped off the pace, while Suninen shone in the dark. The Norwegian recovered well on Saturday, but by then nothing could dislodge the ex-M-Sport man from the class lead, not even a holed radiator and missing front bumper on Saturday.

Gryazin was slowed by punctures and Solberg crashed out again, leaving Huttunen to finish third – the Hyundai man almost robbing himself of the podium after making a hash of the jump at the end of the Powerstage and dislodging most of the i20 Rally2's cooling system. Prokop completed what will be the last of his selected outings this year in fourth.

"It's nice to be in a good, proper team who is working well and giving everything to make good results," said Suninen at the finish, brandishing a verbal handbag towards his former employers. The Finn also took the opportunity to confirm that he will return to WRC2 on the next event in Spain at the wheel of a Hyundai.

Suninen brought cheer to the locals with a fine WRC2 win

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

ROBB GRAVETT: I WON THE BTCC THE HARD WAY

The 1990 British touring car champion reveals how he turned the establishment on its head. By Matt James

Gravett: Took his own path to win

Any driver who wanted to win races outright at the height of the British Touring Car Championship's Group A era had to tame the mighty Ford Sierra RS500.

The iconic cars ruled the roost in a glorious period for tin-top racing from 1987 through to 1990 and the most fearsome iterations of those 550bhp cars came right at the end of that period.

The 1990 title-winner Robb Gravett was the ultimate giant-killer. Not only did he master the power, he took on the series' established big names with his own team and came out on top.

From being railroaded into his circuit debut, he became a regular in the BTCC through the 1990s, firstly in factory teams and then as a leading privateer.

Indeed, the Maidenhead man went on to lift the Independents' crown in 1997 to add to the overall silverware – a rare feat in itself.

Gravett is still a regular in the touring car paddock and is supporting the career of his 27-year-old son Bradley, who is racing in the Mini Challenge UK with aspirations for the BTCC. The next chapter of the Gravett story in the British Touring Car Championship might not have been written just yet.

Dad Robb kindly took some time out of his very busy schedule to tackle the MN readers' posers.

Question: Why did you start racing in an MG? That is an unusual stepping-off point for a touring car hopeful...
Sophie Good
Via email

Robb Gravett: "My competition career started in motocross. I began in the mid-1970s and I represented England in the World championships on a 125cc bike. I retired early because I figured that if I injured myself badly, that would not be for me as I was building up a business and so I left the motorbikes behind. I decided to be sensible.

"At that time I was running a motor factors called Robbco Car and Truck Parts and one of my clients was a company called Moto-Build, which was run by Ray and Grahame Davis. Ray Davis, particularly, was a friend and every time I used to go in there to see them I would be asking them what they wanted to buy from me on that day.

"They would place their order, and then they would be in my ear about starting to race an MG. They raced in the series and were very enthusiastic about it. I was dismissive. This went on for a few weeks: me asking what they wanted to buy and them asking me when I was going to race

"They told me they had found a 1500cc Midget that had been raced up to that point by Trevor Lewis, who had won one of the one-make MG series. He had run out of money and the car was up for sale. They were trying to get me to buy it, and I was dismissive and would just ask what they wanted to buy from Robbco.

"A short while later they rang me up. Ray said 'you know that car we talked about that was for sale? Well, you've' bought it…'

"They had done it off their own backs on my behalf. I went around there with my chequebook, and not only had they bought my car, they had booked me a race licence test and they'd sorted out my first race which would be at Silverstone in a few weeks' time. This was in 1985.

"They had organised for the car's previous owner Lewis to come to Silverstone and help me out. I had never driven around a circuit before.

"It was an MG Owners' Club meeting and there was a full grid, which was quite daunting, but I think I qualified in about eighth place. When I got back to the paddock after qualifying, Lewis said to me 'you can't drive in the way you do'. He said all my lines were wrong and all sorts and he taught me what I needed to be doing. But I knew what I was doing was working and so I stuck with it. I went out and I won the race, my first race.

"That driving style stayed with me and there are only a handful of people who drive the way I drive. I think a lot of my style came from the motorbike competition I had done."

MN: What is your driving style then – what do you do differently?

RG: "I don't brake into the apex of the corner. I change the corner. Instead of putting the pressure on one tyre going into the corner, I try to use both tyres to get a directional change. I have always done that, and it helps. I can run more rear brake as a result. I can also get the directional change quite late on into the corner which means I can get in underneath people."

MN: So what happened after that first race at Silverstone?

RG: "In 1986, I won the MG Car Club Championship and the MG Owners' Club series, and no-one had ever done that before – it was interesting, because both of those championships were proper rivals."

Question: Was it always about tin-top car racing for you Robb? Did you ever want to race a single-seater?
Russell Scobbie
Via email

RG: "I never wanted to be a single-seater driver because I have always been an inherent coward. I always thought that by having your head stuck out of the car, if you damaged your head it is your brain that controls everything. By having your head exposed, you are far more likely to get hurt, so it had no interest for me. With

Photos: Motorsport Images, Gary Hawkins

Gravett took titles in the Group N Ford Sierra

a roof around me and a screen around me, I hoped I would have a little more protection, at least.

"Actually, years later, I was heavily courted by a sponsor to have a go at the Indy Racing League. The first race was the Miami street race, and I just wouldn't do it. The backer got very grumpy with me. I had no background in single-seaters and there was no run-off."

Question: People forget how competitive the production saloon championships were in the late 1980s, when you stepped into them. How much did you enjoy that category?
John Charles
Via email

RG: "After winning the MG championships I figured that there was no point staying in the category and I was pondering my next move.

"At the time, I had a road-going 3.3-litre Porsche 911 Turbo, which was my pride and joy. I considered making that into a racing car. I looked at that seriously, but I reckoned that the turbo wasn't the right car to have.

"I decided to go and do production saloons. My plan was to do the [BRSCC-run] Uniroyal Championship. I sold the Porsche and I bought a Ford Sierra Cosworth from [Ford motorsport specialists] Brooklyn for the 1987 season.

"I found a car that didn't have a roof! I drove it home, we ripped it all out, put a rollcage in it and we were ready to go racing.

"I went out and won the first Uniroyal race and the second event of the season was due to be at Thruxton two weeks later. But, with the limited running there, we weren't going to be able to test before our round.

"But we found that the [BARC-run Production Saloon] Monroe championship was at Thruxton the week before the Uniroyal one. So I decided to enter the Monroe round to get some track time and use it as a test. We ended up winning that round, so I was then leading two championships.

"The upshot was that I won both of those [class] championships that year. It was really competitive back then, I am not sure people realise how fierce it was. You had all the people in there, drivers like Tim Harvey, Laurence Bristow, Jerry Mahony – all the guys who were aspiring to Group A and a shot at the British Touring Car Championship. It was like a one-make series, because to be competitive you had to be in a Sierra.

"I always looked to do things slightly differently to others, and so I went to David Mountain at Mountune. He was building grasstrack-type engines and we started a relationship and we went through racing together. Mountune has been a huge success on the circuits since that starting-off point."

MN: You made your debut in the British Touring Car Championship in that season too in the British Grand Prix support race in July…

RG: "A lot of the production saloon guys wanted to do the British Grand Prix support race because anyone who is anyone was there. I said to David Mountain that I wanted to lead that race, however it happened.

"We had done quite a lot of work on the engines and we had lost a few, so we knew what the weak points were. David built me an engine which we knew wasn't going to last but it ran quite a lot of power. I got the lead on the first lap down the back straight but the problem was the rev counter was going up at the

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Best of friends: Gravett and friend Mike Smith tackled the Willhire 24 Hours in a Ford Sapphire in 1988

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

Production saloons: Gravett ready to go from the front row

same rate as the temperature gauge…

"All I wanted to do was lead that first lap, and I did but then it blew up. We knew we couldn't win it but we wanted to put on a good show and we did."

Question: Your graduation to the BTCC full-time came in 1988 in the Andy Rouse Engineering-run ICS-backed Ford Sierra Cosworth, but there were some rumours of a falling out with Rouse. Was that true?
Stephen Nye
Via email

RG: "I had won 18 races in production saloons across the two championships [Monroe and Uniroyal] in 1987. I thought there was no point in staying in that division and the next natural step was Group A. It was the summit of tin-top racing in the UK.

"But I went into 1988 with no drive. I had not budgeted to run in two championships the year before, so I went into the next season with nothing. I went to the opening British Touring Car Championship race at Silverstone in 1988 and I cried as the cars took to the grid. I was just wondering what else I had to do to warrant a slot on the entry list – I had won everything I could win.

"Andy Rouse's team-mate for 1988, Pete Hall, had driven the ICS car in the opening two rounds but it had rained at the second race at Oulton Park. I think he had scared himself a bit because those cars were monsters. I then had a call – and it was [BTCC racer Jerry Mahony] who instigated this.

"Jerry was friendly with Pete Hall and suggested to Pete that he should let me have a run in the car.

"I got a call from Andy Rouse to test the car at Thruxton, which I did. They offered me the drive there and then."

MN: Was there a falling out with Rouse then?

RG: "Well, when I had the meeting [to confirm the drive], they offered it to me on the proviso that I didn't beat Rouse. I wasn't allowed to overtake Rouse either: the only way I could finish in front of him was if Andy crashed or broke down. They asked me what I thought of it and whether I would accept that, but I really didn't have any other choice at the time. I had no drive. When we got to Silverstone in July for the British Grand Prix support race the worst thing I did was that I overtook him. That didn't go down well but I figured anyone who was anyone would be watching.

"I have always been good at knowing what is going on with chassis. As the year went on, I would be asking for things in the debrief about the rollbars, springs and rideheights and Andy would always say that the team didn't have those bits. But one of the mechanics told me that they did have the kit and those parts were going on Andy's car. The mechanic told me, from that point on, to go straight to him and get the set-up I wanted on the car.

"We did the Tourist Trophy at the end of that season at Silverstone, and I shared the CAM-backed car with Laurence Bristow, which was an Andy Rouse car. I qualified just one second behind Rouse [Rouse, sharing with Alain Ferte, was fourth and Gravett was seventh]. That didn't go down too well. When I went to the warm up on Sunday morning, it was like driving a shopping car – all the boost was gone. Someone had altered the engine on the Andy Rouse-run car overnight…that might have been a contributing factor to any falling out.

"I then had a call from Shell Oils, who had financed much of my seat with Rouse in the Sierra. Shell asked me if I would like to do Bathurst in a Dick Johnson-run car. I was in the third car in the team [with John Bowe and Neville Crichton] but we became the second car when one of the others dropped out. That was all a bit frantic – organising a last-minute flight and all sorts. But that opened a relationship with Dick Johnson and I got on really well with him and John Bowe. They were both very good to me."

Question: How did you become friends with [racer and BBC Radio 1 DJ] Mike Smith? And what led you to form your own team [Trakstar]?
Abi Crowther
Via email

RG: "We became good friends in 1987 because he would have stood a good chance of winning the production saloon title had I not been there. He was always on Radio 1 on the Monday after each round telling the millions of listeners that he *would* have won his race the weekend before had it not been for this chap Robb Gravett…

"We became close and my wife then Mandy and Mike's wife Sarah Greene really got on well. In 1988, Mike was offered the Prodrive deal to race a BMW in the BTCC alongside Frank Sytner, but he was in a similar position to me. Mike was the number two to Frank and under strict instructions, and so we had the same problem in a way but with two different teams.

"So we got together and we figured we should run our own team. I went out to Australia and I bought two cars from Dick Johnson in Australia and we flew them back in the hold of a Virgin Boeing 747. Virgin boss Richard Branson had supported me since 1987 so he helped out."

MN: But you didn't have much time to pull a brand new team all together for the start of the 1989 season – it must have been a rush?

RG: "It was hard work. We moved into a new workshop in Oxfordshire and even when we went to the first race of the season at Oulton Park, the workshop didn't yet have a front door on it. It was all last-minute stuff, but we got there.

"We had no equipment, we had to get all of that. But I did the same thing as I had done with Mountune when I was in production saloons. I wanted something a bit different than what everyone else was running. I flew blind to Tokyo and organised a meeting with Yokohama and I made the suggestion that they should come into Group A racing in the UK.

"They agreed and I told everyone to start with that those tyres fantastic, but in truth they were terrible. We did an awful lot of development work on the tyre.

"With my feedback, I was able to tell them what the tyre needed in terms of construction – not necessarily the compound. We did a lot of work on that. If I had allowed the car to oversteer just once, which was easy to do, the rear tyres would be finished. We did so much work but the reaction time of Yokohama was great – they would be sending over new

"In the warm up on Sunday morning all the boost was gone"

Robb Gravett

TT in 1988 at Silverstone was eye-opener for Gravett and Bristow…

A new start: Gravett in the Traskstar RS500 in 1989

rubber within days of me suggesting something new.

"It was good support, and remember we were running qualifying tyres back then too. We had to work on that, and when you do the set-up for qualifying it was completely different to that which you would use in a race. It was an art to get the tyres switched on for qualifying and to get them to last for a lap. You used to go into the corner, count to two and then brake because the grip was so strong. It had some much lateral grip and you had to try and get that out of the car. We were lucky to be able to use qualifiers at that time."

MN: Would you say it took you that first season in 1989 to get on top of running the Yokohama tyres and running a team yourself? You did win four races and finished second in class…

RG: "When we got the cars back home to the UK for that first season, they were a bit tired. The engines were a bit tired and the chassis were. I understand why – we got given what was left over and what Dick Johnson didn't want. That's understandable – I would probably have done the same thing in reverse.

"It was such hard work and you only get out of it what you put into it. It frustrates me a bit that people look at my 1990 title-winning season and say it was only about the tyres. It was all the groundwork that we had put in up to that point that took us to the success.

"Later on, we backed-to-backed our tyres with the Pirellis that everyone else was using. The Pirellis were 0.8s per lap faster. I know where I was with tyres and we had to work to get that time back. That came from the construction we'd worked on and the set-up.

"I was running a set-up on the car that a textbook would say would never be right, but you only had to look at the clock to see it worked and that is also where my driving style came to the fore: to try and protect the rubber. And that goes back to my initial style that I had in the MG all those years before."

MN: You went into that second season with a blank car – there were no sponsors. What happened to the backing?

RB: "To run those cars then was £1000 per lap. We were running 2.5 bar boost in the car. Andy Rouse was running high compression ratios and low boost, and we were running low compression ratios and higher boost to keep the turbo spinning. It was a rocket ship.

"In 1989, we managed to get Cartel and NEC backing and that was a two-year deal. NEC put a lot of money in and Cartel controlled the deal. NEC were brilliant but we had the money in the first year, but we didn't get the funds through for the second year.

"What Mike Smith and I had to do was go out and find the money on a race-to-race basis. Ford Credit came in and put some money in. I was on £6000 per race win from Ford but that went straight back into the team. We put in all the money we could get and that is why the car's look changed quite often from race to race – we were going out between us and selling little bit of sponsorship before each round just to get us through to the end of that season.

"Every lap we did in testing or qualifying was a lap we felt we might not be able to do in the race because of the financial situation. I would go out in qualifying and do two or three laps to put it on pole, and then go back into the pits and sit on the air jacks just to save money…It is a lot of stress when you are also fighting for a championship title at the same time."

Question: Was the switch to the two-litre Ford Sapphire, which was introduced for 1991, the end of Trakstar?
Jason Inglis
Via email

MN: How involved were you with the birth of TOCA and the new-look regulations for the BTCC from 1991? You had been a title-winning driver and a leading team...

RG: "Mike Smith and I sat in his house in Chiswick in 1990. We came up with the idea for the future of the BTCC as a one-class thing and we came up with the name TOCA that day as well.

"We were supposed to be involved in it all and when it all got sorted out, we were locked out of it."

MN: Why?

RG: "Maybe because we were the upstarts. We had come in with Trakstar and usurped a few people. Andy Rouse clearly didn't like us because we had beaten him. Andy was the kingpin and we had come in knocked him off his perch, and that left us cut out of any deal.

"As for the Sapphire, I had driven at Macau at the end of 1990 in a Watson's Water-backed Sierra Cosworth. I sat in my hotel in Hong Kong that weekend with five manufacturers ringing me and upping the ante to get us involved for 1991 to run a programme.

"Ford Motor Company wanted me to stay with them, and so we eventually got the deal. I stayed with Ford because I thought that was politically the right thing to do and it was the direction Trakstar wanted to go in too.

"The designer created a car with the gearbox in the back because he wanted to try and balance out the weight distribution to make it a 50-50 solution. But it was just like a pendulum in the end

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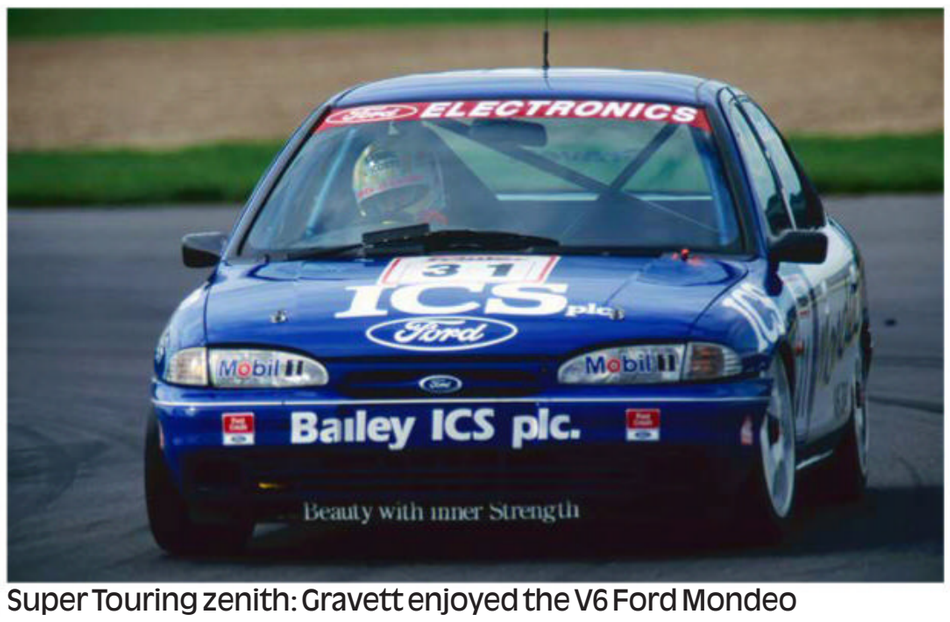
Street circuit in a Ford Sierra R500? Yes plese says Robb Gravett...



Super Touring zenith: Gravett enjoyed the V6 Ford Mondeo

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FEATURE

Peugeot years: Gravett leads Harvey in the French armada

Father and son: Robb (left) give advice to his son Bradley Gravett

and if you hit the kerb at all, it would bend the suspension. There were all kinds of things that were wrong with it. It was the most recalcitrant car I have ever driven. At the end of that year, Ford pulled out – not because of us, they just did – and I was high and dry. The only option left to me was Peugeot."

Question: You came close during the 1993 season, but why did Peugeot never win a British Touring Car Championship race?
Jonathan Astbury
Via email
RG: "That was due to some poor management. It was horrendous. I went to the commercial director of Peugeot UK and told him that he should go and buy two 405s from France where they were running well. They couldn't, because the British side and the French side weren't talking to each other...

"I spent so much time trying to build that team, because I had known how to do it from my days at Trakstar. I knew what needed to be done. But nothing ever happened and it was so frustrating.

"At the end of 1993, I got selected to represent the UK as a wildcard in the FIA Touring Car Challenge at Monza. I went to Peugeot and told them I was happy to go and do the race, but I wanted full autonomy on what I could to with that car. Nothing I wanted to do in the UK was happening, and they agreed to give me a free hand in Italy.

"I was allowed to do what I wanted with the set-up and I was making some radical changes like dropping the rideheight and things like that. I qualified on the third row and I was just fractions away from Yannick Dalmas in one of the all-singing French-run cars which had special bodywork for the race. They couldn't believe it and the French guys were asking us what we had done.

"Then Jo Winkelhock put me off on the main straight at about 145mph in the second race and I hit the wall…"

Question: You drove a Ford Mondeo and the earlier Sapphire, a Vauxhall Cavalier and a Honda Accord in 1997. What was that the best Super Touring car you drove?
Malcolm Munt
Via email
RG: "That is quite a tough question. I think the V6 factory Ford Mondeo I drove at the end of 1994 [when Gravett drove in the final two rounds of the season alongside Andy Rouse and went on to the FIA Touring Car World Cup] was the best one I sampled, but I don't think I ever drove a truly good Super Touring car.

"When I got pushed out of Peugeot, I drove a privateer Mondeo in 1995 as well. We got the Ford on a Friday before the race weekend and I missed the opening qualifying session because we weren't ready. But I managed to win with that car the very first time I raced it at Silverstone that weekend.

"The 1994 factory Ford Mondeo was a great car but the problem was the understeer it had. After three laps, it was terrible. When we had gone to the World Cup at Donington Park, Michelin brought a tyre along which made it feel like you were running a qualifier for the whole time, which was great – but they only ran it for that meeting and we never had it before or since.

"It was a heavy front end on that car and it was hard work, but it was a super chassis. I had to use left-foot braking in that car, which is something I had never done before and I had to learn that pretty quickly. But I did manage to get on top of that."

Question: Did it mean more to you to win the Independents' Trophy in 1997 with the Honda Accord as an underdog than it had to win with Trakstar?
Barry May
Via email
RG: "In terms of the outright title, we should have won in 1989. I was told at the last race at Silverstone to be careful of Andy Rouse and I thought I knew better, but he hit me at the last race. I should have paid more attention.

"His car was phenomenal. David Mountain and I were running the engine right at the limits, as much power as we could get out of it. Take into account that we were doing 185mph down the Hangar Straight in those days. I got a really good exit from Becketts, and he came past me doing something like 20mph more. It would have been tough to win in 1989…"
MN: So where does the Independents' title sit with you?
RG: "It was a different achievement. With the privateers championship, we had tyres that were not the same specification as the factory cars because they didn't want an Independent entry

"After my pole lap I'd sit in the pits to save money"

Robb Gravett

Independents' BTCC title came in a Honda Accord in 1997

winning overall – things are very different today.

"Both were good, but I think the overall title was more important and with the effort we put in between races just to keep going."

Question: Is it true you were in the mix to buy the Brands Hatch group of circuits in 2004 before Jonathan Palmer's MotorSport Vision got it?
James Hilton
Via email
RG: "Yes that is true. I wanted Brands Hatch. Interpublic Group owned it and it wasn't working out for them. We managed to get the money and we had it ready.

"One of my team, during a meeting with the Interpublic board, said something which I didn't think was very clever. It could have embarrassed them in the future. There was something in the background that wasn't right and when my team member highlighted it to them something they knew they didn't want it made public. I said to my team member when we walked out of that meeting that he'd probably just cost me the deal to take over all four tracks.

"Jonathan, in the end, bought it for less money than we had offered."
MN: We didn't realise it was that close…
RG: "It was, but let me say that Jonathan Palmer has done an amazing job with the circuits. I applaud him for what he has done.

"What I wanted to do was to make them a destination. They are great but motorsport is still, and I don't know why, a male-orientated sport. I see no reason why there shouldn't be more females involved in the sport and on the track too.

"The problem is the reason we call the pits the pits is because they are, quite frankly, the pits! You might get your girlfriend or wife there once, if you are lucky you could get her there a second time but you are very unlikely to get her there three times. We had plans to make it into a destination venue where everyone would want to go. It never happened, but we tried.

"I will say again, I think MSV has done a great job there though."

Question: What was the best track you have raced at?
Phil Swaffer
Via email
RG: "Bathurst and Macau. I have always liked street races because you have to be so precise – and in some ways, I think street tracks are safer than conventional circuits. If you make a mistake on a street track, you tend to glance off a barrier. On a [conventional] track, you can go in and have a big crash because of the angle that you go in. But you have to be so precise at Macau, which is why I loved it.

"But Bathurst is my number one, and there a few reasons for it. Firstly, it is the biggest thing in Australia on that day – it is massive as an event. The TV created the in-car TV and helicopter coverage and that also made the event special.

"Also, the Australian fans followed the humans, the drivers. They were either Peter Brock fans or Dick Johnson fans. They were icons in that country and you would drive down the road and they would be on billboards and on TV. But also, the track is something else. When you run across the top of the mountain, a lot of the corners are blind. Skyline is called Skyline because that is the only thing you can see and you have to turn into the corners before you can see them and just know what was behind it. You have to second-guess it."

Question: There is often talk on websites of you making a BTCC comeback – will that ever happen?
Jon Wood
Via email
RG: "That is true [there is talk of a comeback]. There were three seasons where that was very likely to happen but I think it is very unlikely now that I would go back. I train every day and I still train as if I am a driver. My fitness is pretty good and I don't have to wear glasses so my eyes are pretty good. I always feel that if you have to wear glasses, you won't be able to perform at your very top level anymore.

"This is quite a brave thing to say but I think if I had the opportunity to get into what I consider to be a frontrunning car then I probably would consider it even now. I think it would be quite cool to go back in as an older driver and do that."
MN: The media would love that…
RG: "The other side of that is that I don't think it is good to knock younger people out of the championship, so I wouldn't want to do that. My focus now is on my son Bradley who is only two years into his car racing career and is doing the JCW class of the Mini Challenge UK."

Question: Will your son Bradley be a British Touring Car Championship driver one day?
Matthew Weatherley
Via email
RG: "There is a plan for him to go in the BTCC subject to him performing and subject to budgets. We have some long-term contracts in place that should assist that process. That is what he wants to do, but it is all about him performing on track and also being marketable – and he is very good with sponsors and backers. He knows it isn't free money, he knows they are investors." ■

Gravett's son Bradley is a leading light in Mini Challenge racing

Independents' Trophy win: Gravett took privateers crown in 1997

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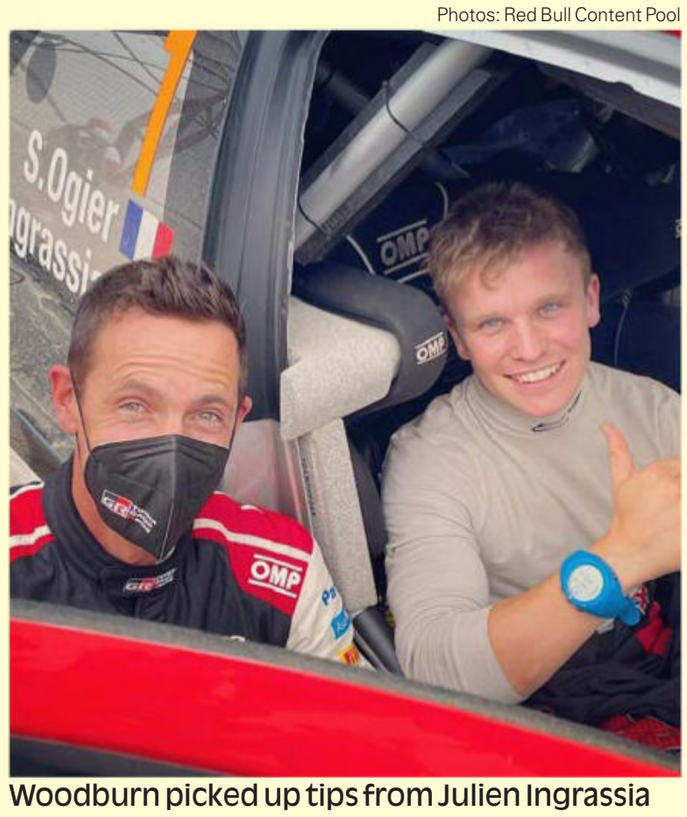
COLUMNIST

TOM WOODBURN

Co-driver who is living the dream with a World Rally Championship outing

Photos: Red Bull Content Pool

Woodburn says Leonid Urlchich's driving improved



Woodburn picked up tips from Julien Ingrassia

It felt flipping good to be back in the World Rally Championship recently, competing with Leonid 'Crazy Leo' Urlichich on the Acropolis Rally.

In recent years I've had to turn down quite a few opportunities because of work, I sort of went off the boil a bit – I wasn't doing as many rallies; as many big events. Acropolis just reiterated that that's where I want to be, at that level. It was a bit hectic given I've just bought my first house, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

Leo and I have spoken over the years a couple of times trying to get stuff sorted, and for whatever reason it's just never come through before. But at the start of this year Alex Kihurani [Sean Johnston's co-driver] messaged saying Leo was looking for a co-driver so I got in touch with Leo and the ball started rolling. The original plan was Sardinia, but soon it became a toss-up between Acropolis and Finland and the decision was made: Acropolis was the chosen one.

I headed out there on Monday the week before the rally, just after doing the Mewla Rally with John Stone, to meet Leo and do some recce practice with him. But I was soon back to the UK on Friday as I was competing on the Woodpecker in the BTRDA with George Lepley. I flew into Stansted at about 2000hrs and had to have a pretty early night, but the event was quite straightforward with it all being based in Radnor and we managed to take home second place.

But I had no time to celebrate, I was back off to Stansted for a Sunday morning flight at about 0700hrs before Acropolis recce began on Monday. I was supposed to be doing the Three Shires with John on the Sunday but when I got in touch with him he said 'you'd be stupid to turn it down'. That was good of him, he wasn't awkward or anything like that.

The recce in Greece was some mission though. It was three days whereas normal WRC events are just two. That's long enough, but factor in that weather, it genuinely was like being on Wales Rally GB again. All of the stages that were up in the mountains were just so foggy, there were cars getting stuck in ditches, it was just a mud bath. I just thought this was not the Greece I left last week!

However on the event itself it was pretty plain-sailing, especially for an Acropolis. We only had one slow puncture on Friday, and that was about 35km after the stage. We took a few big hits throughout the weekend but the car took it very well, and we had a safe set-up to be fair as well. Our rideheight was a few millimetres higher than our team-mates so it was quite a conservative approach.

We did encounter three horses run across us on Friday, but there was a vast, visible improvement in Leo's driving throughout the weekend which was good, but it makes it hard work as a co-driver because with the pace change you need to adjust your delivery accordingly. In the end, we finished 13th overall in the Rally2 class and bearing in mind the likes of Andreas Mikkelsen, Mads Ostberg and Oliver Solberg were there we can be happy with that. The car came back straight, so you can't really fault it. I even got a drive of the car on the last road section towards the finish!

The Acropolis Rally proved to be a huge success

The spectator support was on another level too. I don't think I've ever seen so many spectators on an event – not even in Ypres. Walking through the streets of Athens to the hotel on Thursday night, spectators were just all over you, wanting autographs and pictures. It was just a good buzz, it was crazy to be honest with you. They probably didn't know who I was, they'll get rid of any pictures if they find out!

It was a great end to the weekend too as I spent time with seven-time World champion Julien Ingrassia. What a top bloke he was. The Toyota Yaris is probably one of my favourite WRC cars, so I was just having a bit of a closer look round and he came up to me and said 'have a sit in if you want'. So I did and just got speaking to him for about 20 minutes. I had a look through his pacenotes, I can't read or speak French – I can barely read or speak English! – but he was just so sound, absolutely class.

The post-rally blues were very real when I came home, but I was straight into preparations for the Trackrod. George and I was delighted with second place and then last weekend I was off to the Isle of Man the week after with John Stone in his new VW Polo R5!

But whenever you do these big events, the adrenaline, the high-pressure situation of being on the go all week, it leaves you wanting more. Over the weekend you're somebody and then now I'm back at work being a maintenance technician, it's a big contrast. I'll not leave it so long next time until I'm back in the WRC...

"I don't think I've ever seen so many spectators on an event"

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FEATURE

WHEN RALLY YORKSHIRE PRODUCED THE BRC'S CLOSEST EVER FINISH

As the British Rally Championship returned to Yorkshire for the first time in eight years recently Luke Barry remembers the epic battle of 2012

One tenth of a second was the winning advantage for Cave

Cave's victory was taken by the very narrowest of margins possible

Even today, nine years and eight days since it happened, it's almost impossible to believe the 2012 Rally Yorkshire played out the way it did. Never has there been a closer finish to a British Rally Championship event – not even the epic 2017 Manx International title decider comes close – and nor will there ever be.

It can't get any closer than the top two completing 66 miles of rallying with the same overall time down to the tenth of a second.

The 2012 British Rally Championship season represented the dawning of a new era. Gone were the four-wheel-drive Subarus, Mitsubishis and Super 2000 cars and in their place were front-wheel-drive, R3 class machines. With Citroen's DS3 the star of the class, it effectively became a giant one-make series.

Mark Donnelly won the Sunseeker in his Renault Clio but from then on it was Citroen rule as Tom Cave won the Bulldog and Keith Cronin swept to the Pirelli, Jim Clark and Ulster Rally victories that put him in the box seat for a third (of an eventual four-to-date) British titles. He didn't need to win the finale – Rally Yorkshire – and duly didn't, sealing the final place on the podium to clinch the championship.

The battle at the front was reserved for Cave – who felt he "couldn't get near Cronin on Tarmac but seemed to have the measure of him" on gravel – and Osian Pryce who had had a bit of a steady season up to the point. Yorkshire's six stages ended up being the scene for an epic, beginning with a 15-mile blast through Dalby under the cover of darkness. Incredibly, Cave emerged just 0.1 seconds up on Pryce on that near 17-minute stage. But when those times were first digested, nobody knew just how vital that tenth of a second would turn out to be.

"We had a really good evening in the dark," Cave remembers. "I remember that well because we had a massive moment, an 'I thought we were going off' moment, and I remember Craig [Parry, co-driver] saying at the end of the stage 'that's the nearest I've had from not having an off.' That certainly woke me up a little bit, but we were leading, [although] not by much!"

Cave flirted with disaster and won, but Pryce was carrying an issue. "We lost the brakes because the boys had put new brake pads [in] but they hadn't been bedded in properly," he recalls. "Considering we had no brakes we thought 'flipping heck, we did quite well in there.' I know Tom had a bit of a mishap, I think he went through the bushes and got back on, carrying on at full speed but it's always downhill into junctions, plenty of junctions in there [which is tricky without proper brakes]."

As the sun rose on a new day of rallying, two passes of Gale Rigg awaited the squabbling Welshmen. Cave was quickest on the first run with Pryce only third-fastest, trailing now by 3.1s, and Cave's advantage grew to 8.2s on Gale Rigg 2 as Pryce was again beaten by Desi Henry and also by Cronin on SS3.

Pryce would earn his first scratch time on SS4 Cropton though, pulling 2.8s out of Cave's lead to lurk 5.4s adrift with two stages remaining. But the second attempt at Dalby – this time during the day – would prove to be a turning point as Cave made another error, like he had the previous evening, only this time the consequences were more severe.

"The car jumped out of a rut on a medium-left, so a fourth-gear corner, and it just leapt out the line," Cave explains. "There was a bank on the outside and it just touched the bank with the rear wheel and it bent the rear beam, and it sort of pushed the stub axle on the beam inwards and obviously the tracking of the car then was all out on the rear. We threw away

> ***"I did quite well as I had no brakes on the car..."***
>
> **Osian Pryce**

Osian Pryce was left heartbroken

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

Pryce knew that his last-stage speed was short

Best of rivals: the pair could hardly be split on the podium either...

Cave says that he felt the pressure of victory

10, 12 seconds or whatever it was, and it was the lead gone."

Cave had actually dropped 14.2s to Pryce who was fastest, and now had 8.8s to recover with just one 13.9-mile stage left to go. Mercifully, he was at least granted the opportunity to fight for it as there was an auxiliary service just before the Langdale test.

"The lads managed to get the beam straightened out, not completely but enough for the wheels to be true, shall we say, with the front wheels," says Cave. "The car wasn't perfect still, but it was enough to give us some kind of chance to push through Langdale. I remember at that point going into that last stage, my head was gone really, it was up my arse thinking 'that's it, I've thrown away the rally, how am I going to claw back that time?'

"I remember famously Osian's co-driver at the time Iestyn [Williams] came up to Craig and said 'well that's kind of rally done for you boys now innit?' I remember Craig getting in the car, putting the belts and his helmet on and he was like 'why would you say that? Of course we're not going to give up.' And I was like to Craig 'we don't have much of a chance do we, he's like 10s [ahead] pretty much.' And then he grabbed me and said 'come on for f*ck sake, sort your head out.' He was getting me revved up before the start, and pfft, the rest is history. How I did it? I couldn't tell you how I did it, it was a case of just knuckling down."

It was an inspired and determined push from Cave and Parry, and unbelievably their time was exactly – you guessed it – 8.8s faster than Pryce and Williams'. Both Citroens shared an overall time of 1hr06m21.4s, and a winner had to be declared.

How? In an event of a tie, the tiebreak rule dictated times from the opening stage would be the deciding factor. Remember Cave's slender 0.1s stage win on the first evening? That was enough for him to grab the craziest of crazy victories.

"We just erupted into joy, it was bloody fantastic to hear that!" remembers Cave, fondly. "At the time I didn't quite believe that we'd won it by such a little margin, it's not something you want as a driver to do, put that much pressure on yourself going into the last stage of the rally where you'd been leading for pretty much two thirds of it.

"At the time I was very inexperienced really, I'd never been in a position like that at all," he adds. "OK we had [taken] a couple of overall wins so I kind of knew how to manage the pressure somewhat, but I was just guessing to be honest. I was only going off the direction Craig was giving me at the time because he had so much experience so I couldn't do it without him, hands down. He was the one that got the head back up and said 'come on, we're not giving up yet, we're going to fight to the last corner of the last stage' which we did.

"I still think about it occasionally now for a bit of motivation if you need that, but it was good times, a great battle. Osian, he was very competitive and again nothing really splits us when we do rallies today, we're very, very evenly matched so yeah, nice memories for sure."

Pryce meanwhile lost out on his very first BRC victory, effectively by nothing, but second was at least still a career-best result at that stage. He admits it was "a very, very painful thing" to lose and would've been a big achievement to have chalked off a win in Scarborough, 2012, but is philosophical about the whole affair when he looks back now.

"At the time obviously I didn't see this, but looking back I'm kind of glad I had that lesson learned because I'd been quite steady so to speak all the way up until that point and just found myself in a position where I was fighting for the lead and hadn't really realised, and I didn't grab it with both hands," he explains. "That's what happened on the last stage. I remember going through the stage and thinking 'I'm not quick enough here.' I wasn't aggressive enough, and I remember thinking that.

"When I came to the end, I knew it would be very close. I just had that hunch, you know? And I knew I hadn't driven very well, but again it was one of those situations where I was still a bit naïve, shall we say. And Tom had already won a rally that year, so I think it helps when you've got it done. To do it for the first time, everybody thinks it's easy, but it's really not. It is a hurdle.

"I didn't know what it took properly to win a rally because I was still relatively new to the whole thing, and that's why the disappointment of it all was the best lesson ever in a sense of don't let that happen. And it improved the hunger a bit more then. When we came back the year after it was like all guns blazing and a completely different mindset really, a completely different vibe in the car. Tom didn't have an answer to our speed and he was as confused as anything, so it was nice that it worked like that really."

Pryce's revenge was therefore executed, winning the 2013 event by 9.9s from that year's title winner Jukka Korhonen. Cave was fourth, 29.6s adrift. Incidentally, that Trackrod win was the last in the BRC to date before the series returns this weekend, and was the second in a run of three BRC wins Pryce managed to punch in.

"It just went the way it was meant to go really," Pryce reiterates. "I did sort of plan to win, I did not go there [in 2013] just to make up the numbers. I was on that sort of wave, and when you've got that confidence in everything and everything's working, and with the disappointment of the year before with you on every rally, it was hard not to put the results in."

Pryce has certainly not put his own advice to waste as he lies in the thick of the fight for the 2021 British Rally Championship which, incidentally, was back in Yorkshire for the first time since Pryce's revenge win in 2013 at the end of September. ■

OTHER NAILBITING TIEBREAKERS

Granite City Rally, 2015

Dave Weston Jr interrupted his BTRDA Gold Star campaign – which he won – in 2015 to tackle his home event: the Granite City Rally.

Running a Subaru Impreza S12B WRC, his likely rival was David Bogie's Ford Fiesta R5+ and so it proved. The event began with two spectator-friendly stages but once out in the forests, Bogie and Weston Jr were bosses, overhauling Jock Armstrong who led after SS2. Incredibly they shared the same SS3 time, but Weston Jr led by just a single second. Bogie then pulled three seconds out of his Subaru rival to lead by 2s over the next two stages only to lose 1s on SS6.

The Fiesta driver looked to have sealed it by entering the final test with a 4s advantage, but Weston Jr pulled it out the bag and beat Bogie by 4s to tie for first, 1m45s clear of the rest. The win was Weston Jr's due to SS2 times as the pair again tied on SS1, but Weston was 1s quicker on SS2.

Border Counties Rally, 2016

Another Scottish event, and one year later, Jock Armstrong and Garry Pearson were at loggerheads in a battle that would define that year's Scottish championship season.

Reigning SRC champion Armstrong was quickest out the blocks in his Subaru Impreza, beating Shaun Sinclair's Ford Focus WRC07 by two seconds with Pearson's Fiesta R5 some 12s down. Two thirds into the six-stage event, Armstrong's lead was 8s over Sinclair with Pearson another 9s back, 17s from the lead.

But on just his second event ever in a four-wheel-drive car, Pearson was imperious across the final two tests. Quickest on SS5 by 8s to jump into second, Pearson faced a seemingly insurmountable 9s deficit on the final stage. Not so. The Fiesta R5 was precisely 9s faster than the Impreza on the nine-mile test to draw level overall. It was a truly inspired comeback performance, but Armstrong clung onto victory by the skin of his teeth thanks to his scratch time on SS1.

Pearson missed out as he got used to a four-wheel-drive car

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

THE DAKAR DREAM TEAM

Britain's first all-female crew is aiming high, by Nick Garton

Team Excite is honing its skills on British events in 2021

Team Excite aims to put talented British women forward to Dakar

As motorsport continues to grapple with the issues du jour of sustainability and diversity, we are presented with an endless parade of initiatives that lay claim to reducing our carbon footprint and making ours a more accepting and inclusive sport. But let's be frank: many of these initiatives may prove to be the work of snake oil salesmen looking to find a new way to make a quick buck or simply to be heard saying the right thing.

Such an accusation cannot be levelled at Team Excite: a new all-female team that is aiming to make an impact on the Rally-Raid world and achieve honours on the Dakar. The team certainly made all the right noises about 'redressing the gender imbalance' but equally we are talking about rallying here, the discipline with arguably the highest achievements recorded by women in the entire world of motorsport.

Pat Moss and Ann Wisdom, Michele Mouton and Fabrizia Pons, Louise Aitken-Walker and Tina Thorner – these are the superstars who represent the many hundreds of women who participate at every level in rallying. When it comes to the Dakar, let's not overlook Jutta Kleinschmidt standing tall with half a dozen top-five finishes, including outright victory in 2001.

Each of the three women who currently form the line-up of Team Excite are high achievers individually. Take navigator Claire Williams, for example: a qualified rally stage commander and co-driver to Alan Carmichael in a Hyundai i20 R5 on this year's British Rally Championship.

"Women have been competing in rallying for years and it's probably one of the very few sports where you can compete on a level playing field with men," she says. "In all fairness it's very inclusive like that, whereas other sports you get 'women's versions' sort of thing, in rallying it's inclusive and you're accepted for how you do.

"Lately there's been a lot of push on getting more women into motorsport and I'm fully backing that," Williams adds. "But as a woman in motorsport my main motivation is to be measured on the results that I can produce. It's not necessarily the fact that I'm a woman that I want to be recognised for."

As with all the team members, Willams's route to Team Excite began with responding to a Facebook appeal for talented drivers and navigators to join in the mission. Williams was one of the earliest to heed the call and duly impressed the team's management with her approach from the outset.

"I said: 'It's a great thing that you're doing, an all-women team, it's nice that it shows that women can come together and take the fight to the boys, I love that side of it'," Williams says. "But when the chips are down, I want to be seen as a competitor first and foremost. We can do exactly what the guys do, and we just want to be measured on how we compete.

"The fact that we're an all-female team… the first all-female British team to try and do the Dakar, then if something hasn't been done before you really want to be among the first to do it. That's something I really take my hat off to what Excite is trying to achieve and I'm really excited to be part of."

The team was founded by former British National competitor John Hardy, who spotted the opportunity to make a mark on the world's most celebrated endurance marathon. After trying his own hand at the discipline with an outing on the Silk Road Rally from Europe to Mongolia, the opportunity to create the first British female team to compete at the highest level simply seemed too enticing to pass up.

"I gave up stage rallying back in 2005," Hardy says. "Then I was watching Dakar about two or three years later on the telly and I thought: 'I want to do this.' So, I started doing some homework on it and tried to get some backing, but it was nigh-on impossible because while the rest of the world seems to love Dakar, the UK's a bit behind.

"It was clear that [to get to Dakar] I needed something that's going to catch the imagination. I started bouncing ideas

Photos: Songasport

Williams has inspired the team to expand

British Cross-Country has welcomed the new team

Davison and Paveley have a long-standing rapport outside the car

Paveley has added digger driving and broadcasting to repertoire

about and while women have done the Dakar on bikes, in cars and trucks, there's never been an all-British, all-female crew."

In 2021, Hardy's operation has taken its first steps towards this goal by contesting the British Cross-Country championship with a Mitsubishi Pajero that was originally built by Ralliart Italy for European Baja events. The car sits alone in the over 4-litre production class on an entry list full of specialised buggies, but Hardy is focused on making sure that the three women on the team gain the right experience to tackle their coming challenge.

"We turned up at the first round and there's all these super-duper, low-centre-of-gravity, off-road cars that have sequential 'boxes and absolutely fly along," Hardy notes. "And we turned up with this international-spec, two-ton, top-heavy sort of car and I thought we'd be a bit of a laughing stock, but everyone's been so supportive and so nice, they like to see something different in the championship, the marshals have been so supportive, and the feedback is tremendous.

"We're not going to win events but the car's completed every stage [on three events] so far, the girls are getting valuable seat time and we're just growing all the time. I can't quite believe how far it's come for us all this season."

Team Excite's driver is Jade Paveley, former title-winning junior karter and Britcar endurance racer, who followed her father, long-time competitor Dave Paveley, into rallying, where she finished fifth overall in the Motorsport News series. Not only is she now pursuing her career down this new path towards the Dakar, but she is also broadcasting about rallying for the BBC and as a stage-end reporter on the WRC's streaming service.

"It's so different to rally, it's mad," she says. "You'll be driving along a stage and then suddenly there's like a crazy drop with a river to get across and it's such an amazing world to try and tap into. The organisation of the events is fantastic. It's such a friendly bunch and they've got such a great way of going about it that it's really nice to find something different in motorsport.

"I had to learn over lockdown to drive tractors and diggers and go off-road at my partner's Forest Experience Rally School to maintain it during Covid so it was quite good training in a way. The car we're driving now, the Pajero, has this huge fuel tank in the back and it's a world away from the karts or the Subaru that I'm used to. I've only done Tarmac events before, not a hell of a lot of gravel, but so far we've stayed on – and a lot of people haven't!"

"I want to be seen as a competitor first and foremost..."

Claire Williams

Much of the success or failure of Cross-Country events stem from the chemistry in the car, and in the team's other navigator, Hannah Davison, Paveley has a long-standing friendship out of the cockpit to fall back on as well as her considerable expertise as a co-driver. Davison is a veteran of the BTRDA and Welsh Forestry championships, whose abilities are called upon by some of the sport's rising stars.

Excite founder John Hardy

"I've just got back from America where I was competing in an R5 with Tom Williams, which was just a last-minute thing that wasn't in my plans at all but that was great. I'd love to do more in R5, whether it be here or in America I'm hoping to juggle both," she says.

"The British Cross-Country championship has made us really welcome and been the ideal introduction to a very different side to the sport. Jade just takes the bull by the horns and goes for it. Europe will be a much bigger challenge that I'm really looking forward to, getting involved with road books and routes and deeper into the navigation side of things rather than doing one course several times as we do in the UK."

For team boss Hardy there is also valuable learning to be had from every stage mile as he continues to see his crew gel and, just as importantly, he helps them to build up the knowledge required to tackle the gruelling challenges ahead.

"What I want to see at each event is how the girls approach the recce, how they find the different tyres that we get from Maxxis and how we learn and improve on stage after stage. The improvement is actually clear to see from one event to the next on every single stage," he says.

"To win at stage rallying you've got to be super-quick but with events like Dakar it's a test of everything: endurance, navigation, determination. You need to be quick when you can be, but essentially it's about being able to cope when you're roughing it, away and competing for two weeks. It's dirty, sweaty and horrible and tries to break you physically, mentally and mechanically."

In fact, the team is now not only keen to see one all-female crew making their way towards the Dakar, but is now actively considering running a second car. "Claire wasn't able to do Kielder and won't be able to join us at the final round at Walters Arena, but she and Jade did the first two events together and now Hannah has taken over as navigator for the second two events," Hardy says.

"Jade and Hannah know each other very well outside of rallying and work together really well in the car, but what I would very much like to do is grow into a two-car team with Claire and another driver, and we are in talks with someone, because you don't want to go to Dakar with one car.

"Ideally, we would have a third car with myself and a mechanic, half an hour or so behind, like a chase car but it has to be part of the competition. Our aim is just to finish because anyone who finishes the Dakar is a winner in their own right, and that's what we want to be doing. We'll go for a European season next year, then look at things like the Africa Eco Race in Morocco to build experience on sand and then go for the Dakar and Silk Way in 2024." ■

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

RACING REPORTS

Photos: Steve Hindle

OULTON PARK: MSVR BY STEVE HINDLE — OCTOBER 1-2

Graham de Zille was the man on form in Ferraris

James Swift pulled off an unlikely Ferrari title campaign

SWIFT HOLDS HIS NERVE TO OUST AN UNLUCKY KHERA

James Little won the second Formula Classic race

James Swift overhauled a luckless Lucky Khera to win the Ferrari Challenge UK Trofeo Pirelli at Oulton Park on Saturday.

Former Radical racer Swift had missed the season's opener, meaning that Khera held a 19-point advantage but, such has been Swift's form (dropping just one point from the last 70), he was always going to be a threat, especially when he lit up his brakes to deliver an outstanding pole position lap for race one.

Leading from the start, it should have been a straightforward run to the line for the Dick Lovett man, especially when Khera found himself in the wrong gear as he headed slowly towards the first corner.

And worse was yet to come for the self-styled 'World's Fastest Punjabi': Hunting-down Henry Simmons in a bid to catch the leaders, Khera went for a gap as Simmons went wide and the resulting contact put both out of the race, but not before Khera left a trail of fluid in his wake.

Minutes later, Paul Simmerson clattered the kerbs and dumped oil along the same racing line. Suddenly, those that weren't spinning slowed as traction became treacherous, and Swift, without the measure of cars in front, allowed Paul Hogarth and Graham De Zille to close. Approaching Lodge for the final time, Hogarth believed in the impossible and lunged down the inside, shunting Swift sideways, leaving De Zille to calmly watch events unfold and take the win.

In a wet race two, Han Sikkens took a valuable point off both Swift and Khera for pole position, Swift lining-up in second spot while Khera was one place further back. The championship maths was simple: whoever finished ahead between Khera and Swift would take the title.

Sikkens led from the start while Swift seemed never more than a length behind. Khera was with them at first but then fell back before summoning all he could muster, ready to launch his attack, only for the safety car to be deployed after Faisal Al-Faisal speared into the barrier. With precious minutes slipping by, a one lap shootout beckoned. Sikkens was straight on the gas, followed by Swift who appeared to gap Khera. Desperate to keep in touch, the champion carried too much speed through Old Hall, unbalancing his car all the way down towards Cascades where the camber got the better, forcing the Ferrari to swap ends and in doing so, spun Khera out of contention. Hogarth claimed his second podium of the weekend while De Zille took Coppa Shell honours.

Each of the three Pirelli Ferrari Formula Classic races produced fantastic duels between the F355s of James Little and Wayne Marrs. Marrs came out on top in Friday's sunshine but in Saturday's rain the positions changed: Little held off Marrs in a straight fight in race two while the third encounter first required both to catch and pass James Cartwright's 328GTB before dicing to the flag.

RACE WINNERS

Ferrari Challenge UK
Race 1: Graham De Zille;
Race 2: Han Sikkens

Pirelli Ferrari Formula Classic
Race 1: Wayne Marrs (Ferrari F355 Challenge); **Race 2 & 3:** James Little (Ferrari F355 Challenge)

SILVERSTONE: ECR BY STEPHEN LICKORISH — OCTOBER 2

Photos: Mick Walker

BIANCHI IS UNTOUCHABLE IN NEW RACE MEETING FORMAT AT SILVERSTONE

The spectacular combination of Tom Smith in an MGB on a very wet Silverstone National Circuit was not quite enough to defeat Tony Bianchi's V8-powered Farrallac in the quickest of the finals in Equipe Classic Racing's inaugural 'Super Sprint' event.

For its first-ever standalone meeting – and its final 2021 fixture – ECR devised a unique format. The 62-strong field was randomly divided into four qualifying sessions and whether a driver finished in the top or bottom half determined if they would go into the slower or faster side of the draw. Each driver would contest two 10-lap heats – again with the top and bottom finishers progressing in different directions – before four finals took place, each featuring drivers and cars of a similar performance.

Smith started his final ninth but it did not even take him a lap to grab the lead as he wrung every ounce of performance from the MGB in his preferred wet conditions. But Bianchi's Farrallac sports-racer was also on a charge. By the time Bianchi snared second, Smith's lead was six seconds. This was quickly down to zero before Bianchi blasted ahead on the Wellington Straight. Smith valiantly tried to stay with Bianchi but ultimately had to settle for second, while Andrew Smith's Cooper Monaco was third after initially struggling in the wet in a rear-engined car with a light front end.

"I didn't think I could beat a good MGB with a good driver in these conditions," admitted Bianchi, who added he enjoyed the compact format of the Super Sprint, saying it "keeps you on your toes".

The second final, for the quicker cars in the slower half of the field, was also a cracker. Pete Shepherd's nimble Austin-Healey Sebring Sprite soon passed Ben Savill's Porsche 911 and Jamie Mason's Turner Mk2 but was never able to pull comfortably clear of the chasing pack. Tom Woodcock's MGB rose to second when Gavin Crawford's similar car had a moment at Luffield and then began closing on Shepherd. The pair entered the final sequence of corners side-by-side on the last lap but Shepherd just clung on.

Richard Lawson's MGA triumphed in the 'slowest' final, despite briefly dropping behind Paul Eales' MGB, having passed polesitter Andrew Davenhall's magnificent Austin A105/6 on the opening tour. There was to be no stopping

RACE WINNERS

Equipe Super Sprint
Race 1: Richard Lawson (MGA); **Race 2:** Paul Eales (MGB); **Race 3:** Rick Willmott (Jaguar E-type); **Race 4:** Andrew Smith (Cooper Monaco); **Race 5:** Jamie Mason (Turner Mk2); **Race 6:** Gavin Crawford (MGB); **Race 7:** Mark Ellis (MGA Twin Cam); **Race 8:** Tom Smith (MGB)

Final 1
Richard Lawson (MGA)

Final 2
Pete Shepherd (Austin-Healey Sebring Sprite)

Final 3
Richard Hywel Evans (Austin-Healey 3000)

Final 4
Tony Bianchi (Farrallac Mk2)

Richard Hywel Evans' Healey 3000 in the third final, but Oli Pratt's battle for second with Dominic Mooney was entertaining.

Bianchi had to battle rivals and the weather to prevail

Peter Shepherd (85) splashed his way to a win in Final 2

RACING REPORTS

Photos:Richard Styles

CASTLE COMBE: CCRC AUTUMN CLASSIC BY MARCUS PYE — OCTOBER 2

WATERFIELD WALKS ON WATER FOR A DOUBLE

Twenty three-year-old Tom Waterfield starred at Castle Combe on Saturday, winning the wet Autumn Classic's 500cc Formula 3 race, then defending his Freddie Giles Memorial Frazer Nash title, this time piloting mother Jo's Super Sports.

Waterfield saddled Tim Ross' Cooper-Norton brilliantly in the event opener. On pole by 9.7 seconds in a gruesomely slippery session, Tom was not quite as dominant in the race. Martyn Corfield (Cooper Mk8) led the chase, pursued by the impressive Alex Wilson (Mackson), whose father Chris finished fifth, securing the 500 Owners' Association series crown in his Cooper Mk10.

Spurred on by stepfather Simon Blakeney-Edwards' tight FN Super Sports victory over Tim Kneller (Riley TT Sprite) in the VSCC Owner-Driver-Mechanic race, Waterfield shot from seventh to challenge poleman Dougal Cawley in the big Nash race inside a lap. Waterfield snaked ahead when his rival's 'Piglet' threw its fourth gear chain and was eventually retired.

Waterfield lost his third cog, yet still beat David Wylie's two-litre Super Sports by a country mile. Simon B-E, who entered late for more fun, jostled from the back of the 23-car field to third, passing Tom Walker's Ford-powered GN 'Big Yellow' two laps from home.

Cawley bagged VSCC Allcomers' victory over Tom Walker, whose Hispano-Suiza aero-engined Amilcar lost its edge. When pursuer Harry Painter parked his MG at the Esses, brother James took third in his first wet race in the supercharged MG Kayne Special.

Unable to set a practice time, Oliver Llewellyn was unfazed by the soggy surface as he blasted the family Allard J2 from the back of the FISCAR1950s' Intermarque grid to lead by lap five. Father Tim took over and completed the job, deposing David Alexander (Lotus Elite) at Folly on the final lap. Marc Gordon had a grandstand view from his Jaguar XK150S, clear of Nick Wigley who had supplanted John Ure in Peter Mann's ex-Tony Crook Cooper-Bristol T24/25.

Richard Butterfield and James Dorlin won the Jaguar Enthusiasts' Club's Norman Dewis Memorial Trophy race, overcoming early duellists John Young (Mk1) and Grant Williams (Mk2). Tom Barclay (Mk1) grabbed third when Williams' steed faded.

Cleverly orchestrated tactics and tail-out driving enabled Austin-Healey 3000 owners Mark Holme and Doug Muirhead to finish 1-2 in the very wet 90-minute GT & Sports Car Cup enduro. Both were abetted by preparer Jeremy Welch, who started Muirhead's TON 792 and drove a short middle stint in Holme's ex-John Gott SMO 746.

After a safety car interlude for the clearance of Camp spinner Alice Locke's MGB and the Lotus Elan 26R of Mark Martin, unable to avoid it, local ace Mark Williams completed the podium in his AC Cobra.

Waterfield: an appropriate name for a doubie winner at a soggy Castle Combe

James Dorlin/Richard Butterfield topped Jags

Oliver Llewellin won from the very back of the grid

RACE WINNERS

500CC F3
Tom Waterfield (Cooper-Norton Mk9)

VSCC Pre-War Sportscars
Simon Blakeney-Edwards (Frazer Nash Super Sports)

JEC Norman Dewis Memorial Trophy
Richard Butterfield/James Dorlin (Jaguar Mk2)

FNCC Freddie Giles Memorial Trophy
Tom Waterfield (Frazer Nash Super Sports)

FISCAR Historic Intermarque
Oliver & Tim Llewellyn (Allard J2)

VSCC Allcomers
Dougal Cawley (GN/Ford 'Piglet')

GT & Sports Car Cup
Mark Holme/Jeremy Welch (Austin-Healey 3000)

SNETTERTON: MSVR BY PETER SCHERER — OCTOBER 2-3

HONOURS EVEN IN FOUR TROUBLED GT CUP ENCOUNTERS

John Dhillon's Lamborghini took charge of the first wet GT Cup race of the weekend after Richard Neary's Mercedes spun on lap five. But, on the penultimate lap, Dhillon was caught out at Agostini, which left Steve Burgess' Radical and Morgan Tilbrook's McLaren in a duel to the flag.

They were side by side on occasions but Burgess held on, with Dhillon recovering to complete the podium.

Most of the second race was under the safety car, with Richard Neary heading Tillbrook plus Shamus Jennings' Porsche. After two laps of racing it was caution again and the top six all made their stops together, before the new top 10 followed a lap later. But the race was red flagged and on countback it was Charlotte Gilbert's Marcos Mantis collecting the spoils, having not made her stop. The Nearys were still second, from Paul Bailey/Ross Wylie's McLaren.

Sam Neary dominated race three from Burgess, while Tillbrook snatched third from Dhillon on the last lap, but it was Tillbrook/Marcus Clutton to the fore in the final race, with the Nearys heading Dhillon/Sandy Mitchell for second

There was a comfortable win for Josh Law's MCR in the first Sports 2000 race, with Richard Johnson second from Agostini on lap six and Michael Gibbins demoting Tom Stoten for third on the last lap.

Stoten won races two and three with Law second in both, which was enough to crown him 2021 champion.

The first of the Porsche Club races went to Peter Morris, after a first-lap clash at Agostini dropped Simon Clark down the order and left Mark McAleer heading pitwards with a puncture. Morris shared a few exchanges with Chris Dyer before consolidating the lead, while James Caley was third.

Caley proved uncatchable in the second and very much wetter race, with Dyer and Richard Ellis joining him on the podium.

There was a double win for Ben Powney in the Monoposto Tiedeman Trophy. He spent first part of race one chasing Nikita Abramov but, having got by a lap from home. he was soon in the clear. Mark Betts' Jedi held onto third until the last lap, when Karl O'Brien's Leastone breached his defence.

Powney was clear from the start of race two, despite two laps under caution. Abramov and Betts also held station in second and third.

RACE WINNERS

GT Cup
Race 1: Steve Burgess (Radical RXC); **Race 2:** Charlotte Gilbert (Marcos Mantis); **Race 3:** Sam Neary (Mercedes AMG GT3); **Race 4:** Morgan Tillbrook/ Marcus Clutton (McLaren 720S GT3)

Sports 2000
Race 1: Josh Law (MCR S2); **Races 2 & 3** Tom Stoten (Gunn TS11)

Porsche Club
Race 1: Peter Morris (997 C2S); **Race 2:** James Caley (997 C2S)

Monoposto Tiedman Trophy
Races 1 & 2: Ben Powney (Jedi)

Trackday Trophy Championship
Justin Roberts (Honda Civic Type R)

Heritage Formula Ford
Ben Cochran (Van Diemen LA10)

911 Challenge
Races 1 & 2: Robert Hollyman (Porsche 964)

MONDELLO PARK: MPSC BY LEO NULTY — OCTOBER 2-3

SEASON'S TITLES DECIDED IN TENSE FINALE AT MONDELLO PARK

Graham McDonnell wrapped up the Fiesta Championship with a strong win in race one, while in race two Kevin Doran held off a strong challenge from Darragh Denning, who was mugged on the way to the line by the charging Jack Byrne in a highly entertaining race.

Michael Barrable assured himself of the Zetec Fiesta title by following Alan Dawson home in the first race, but when the heavens opened in the second race, Harry McGovern took the honours. He was shadowed for the duration by the impressive Aimee Woods.

Michael Roche took the opening BOSS Ireland race, as Sylvie Mullins slowed to chase the outright lap record. And in a wet second race, Fergus Faherty ran away and hid from the rest with Mullins second and a delighted Roland Doherty in third.

Rob Barrable, Geoff Richardson and Peter Barrable shared the Legend wins, with Richardson clinching the title in the final race.

Gareth Thompson's MG BGT V8 took both HRCA races, when Jackie Cochrane spun his Sunbeam Tiger in race one and didn't get off the grid in race two. Johnny Flynn was third in his immaculate MG Midget in race one and just came out tops in a hectic battle with the similar car of Connor Cooke, with both finishing on the podium.

Michael Cullen took both Stryker wins, to complete an incredible unbeaten season. Richie Kearney took two fine Formula Sheane wins, raising funds for charity in the process.

The Punto Abarth mounted duo of Gary Duggan and Daniel McDonnell shared the Future Classic honours.

Having already sewn up the title, Michael Cullen completed his clean sweep of Stryker wins in 2021 by triumphing in both races.

Paul Parr and Alan Watkins shared the Supercar wins, while Ulick Burke took the honours in both ITCC races, clinching the title in the process. Shane Murphy took his usual SEAT Supercup win in the opener, but Neil Tohill was first across the line in race two.

RACE WINNERS

Irish Legends
Race 1: Peter Barrable; **Race 2:** Jamie Moylan; **Race 3:** Robert Barrable

HRCA
Races 1 & 2: Gareth Thompson (MG BGT V8)

Formula Sheane
Races 1 & 2: Richard Kearney

Stryker Championship
Races 1 & 2: Michael Cullen

Fiesta ST Championship
Race 1: Graham McDonnell; **Race 2:** Kevin Doran

Fiesta Zetec Championship
Race 1: Alan Dawson; **Race 2:** Harry McGovern

Formula BOSS Ireland
Race 1: Michael Roche (Dallara F306); **Race 2:** Fergus Faherty (Dallara F3)

Future Classics
Race 1: Gary Duggan (Fiat Punto Abarth); **Race 2:** Daniel McDonnell (Fiat Punto Abarth)

ITCC
Race 1 & 2: Ulick Burke (Honda Integra)

Irish Supercars
Race 1: Alan Watkins; **Race 2:** Paul Parr

Seat Supercup Ireland
Race 1: Shane Murphy; **Race 2:** Neil Tohill

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RACING REPORTS

Photos: Ben Lawrence

PRESCOTT RALLY HILLCLIMB: BOC BY PAUL LAWRENCE — OCTOBER 3

RALLY ICONS TAKE ON THE DAUNTING PRESCOTT CHALLENGE

Stephen Moore made history by becoming the first rally class winner at Prescott

Graham Middleton demonstrated some of the more modern rally machinery

A little piece of motorsport history was made on Sunday when the inaugural Rallye Prescott became what is believed to be the UK's first competitive hillclimb dedicated to rally cars.

Experienced hillclimber Stephen Moore set a convincing fastest time of the day in his Mitsubishi Lancer E6 with a first climb in 46.74 seconds while local Lee Kedward was best of the regular rally drivers as he broke the 50s mark in his older Lancer E3.

Though the entry of around 50 rally cars was fewer than the target, a fair crowd and a relaxed atmosphere made the event at the Gloucestershire hill climb venue a good start from which to build a dedicated rallying-based event.

The event was a bold initiative by the venue-owning Bugatti Owners Club and cars spanning half a century of rallying history tackled three practice runs and two timed runs on the 1100-yard course. When a shower of rain left the hill damp for the second runs, Moore was a clear winner after an attacking first climb.

In terms of entertainment, standout performer of the day was Steve Harkness. In his Holbay-powered Ford Escort Mk2 he wowed the crowd with his customary spectacular handling of the car, arriving at the Pardon hairpin on each climb with the car sliding sideways after a well-judged handbrake flick. That was just the type of spectacle the crowd had come to see and more of that will make the event an absolute winner. "It's been a cracking day out," said Harkness. "It's a very social event and I'd be happy to do one or two a year for some fun."

Famous colours on the hill in the hands of Kevin Knight

Sideways to thrill the fans: Steve Harkness's Escort

For drivers used to at least 45 competitive miles in a day, five runs at the hill was an awful lot less seat time than usual, but many could see the appeal of such an event and, entry fee aside, costs were minimal.

Some used it as a shakedown, like Rothmans Escort-BDG Mk2 pilot Alan Watkins who wanted a competitive event before taking his Pinto-engined Mk2 to the Killarney Historic in November. "There is massive interest in rally cars and there is a market for this type of event," said Watkins.

Graham Middleton brought his Mitsubishi Mirage R5 and stuck some cheap remould tyres on it just to be able to slide the car around and entertain the fans. "It's a good way to attract people into rallying," said Middleton.

Flying the flag for the older cars was the Lotus Elite of Peter Joy, who shared it with seasoned rally driver Ian Beveridge. For Beveridge, it was only his second hillclimb since 1988 when he ran his MG Metro 6R4 in a round of the multi-discipline 6R4 Challenge at Prescott. Joy's Elite remains a regular contender on historic road rallies.

Before the end of the day, Gemma Price, the general manager of Prescott, had already formulated plans for the event to run again next year. As an international standard co-driver, she is well placed to guide the event as it develops over the coming years. "We're very happy with it," she said. "This was very much the start of an event that can grow." A date in the autumn of 2022 is already in the calendar.

BTRDA RALLYCROSS SERIES: BLYTON BY HAL RIDGE — OCTOBER 3

BLEASDALE PICKS UP WHERE HE LEFT OFF IN BTRDA BATTLE

Vauxhall VX220 driver Jason Bleasdale continued his rich vein of form in the fifth round of the BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship at Blyton Park.

On the back of a double victory weekend in the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy a week earlier, the Super Modified driver shared fastest times in qualifying with Ford Fiesta campaigner Fred Ling in the penultimate round of the Clubmans series, then used his rear-wheel-drive advantage to win the race to Turn 1 in the final and lead from lights to flag. It was a repeat of his round two victory at the same venue.

Ling finished second, a strong result following a string of reliability issues in recent events, while Phil Chicken, who had retired from the British RX event in Scotland a week earlier with engine issues, returned with his repaired MB Motorsport-prepared Citroen C2 and completed the podium.

Darren Bleasdale was highest placed of the BMW Mini sub-class runners with fourth in the A final, ahead of fellow Mini racer Nick Abbott.

The race of the day though was arguably the Classic A final. Lancia Stratos runner John Cross beat top qualifier Vincent Bristow off the line in the run to Turn 1, but BMW 318 racer Bristow found a way through on the opening tour to retake the advantage and subsequently held on, absorbing substantial pressure from Cross, to win.

Richard Moroney drove his Ford Escort to third, chased by a train of Ryan Stutchbury (Peugeot 205), David Attiwell (Vauxhall Nova) and Jamie McBain (Peugeot 205).

The Production A final was also an entertaining encounter, in which pole-starter Dale Ford led for all but the final lap. Having chased the leader throughout, attached to rear bumper of Ford's Citroen Saxo, Rory Dening made a move stick into the final corner of the fifth tour. The pair ran side-by-side through Turn 1 of the last lap and Dening claimed the win.

Ford was second and former World Touring Car Championship driver Harry Vaulkhard competed the podium. Charley Moroney led a battle for fourth, with fourth to eighth covered by just five seconds at the finish.

Kacper Potyra led the Junior final for almost the duration, but retired on the final tour with a broken driveshaft on his Citroen Saxo. Owen Robbins inherited the win and continues to lead the points race. Max Watt and Corey Padgett completed the podium.

Dan Beattie led the Production 4x4 final – comprising solely of Subaru Imprezas – throughout. Paul Davis was second while Christopher Baker fought back from changing his car's gearbox between free practice and heat three to finish on the podium. Suzuki Swift driver Max Weatherly won the Modified final from Jonny Chrisp and Alan Laidler. Chris Wheeler retired with electric issues during the race.

Results

Round 5: Super Modified: 1 Jason Bleasdale (Vauxhall VX220) 6m00.549s; 2 Fred Ling (Ford Fiesta) +11.805s; 3 Phil Chicken (Citroen C2); 4 Darren Bleasdale (BMW Mini); 5 Nick Abbott (BMW Mini); 6 Andrew Hawkes (BMW Mini). **Production:** Rory Dening (Peugeot 106). **Junior:** Owen Robbins (Suzuki Swift). **Production 4x4:** Dan Beattie (Subaru Impreza). **Modified:** Max Weatherly (Suzuki Swift). **Classic:** Vincent Bristow (BMW 318i).

Photo: Sarah Hall

Bleasdale was unstoppable on his way to victory in the Super Modified division

The Production 4x4 race honours fell to the Subaru Impreza of Dan Beattie

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE

The crowning glory for Robb Gravett, our readers' Q&A guest this week, was his 1990 British Touring Car Championship title, and there was a lot more to that title than you might assume.

It was BTCC's swansong for Group A and the famous Ford Sierra RS500. Gravett's version that year was cash strapped though, evidenced by the bare livery on his Trakstar machine. Further his battle with fellow RS500 runner Andy Rouse was dramatic and tense. And the good news is that YouTube has plenty from that season, in the form of BBC Grandstand's packages of best bits.

For our purposes though we'll focus on Gravett seeking to complete his record seven-race victory run at mighty Brands Hatch. It again was a race for him and Rouse, and Gravett resolves the matter with a "death defying act".

As a bonus we also get the two-litre class's frantic race-long battle. There's John Cleland in a Vauxhall Cavalier resisting Frank Sytner's BMW and a few others. The eagle-eyed among you will also spot a 'D Coulthard' in the starting

Gravett leads BTCC pack

order. There's also familiar narration from M Walker.

You can watch 24 minutes' worth at: youtube.com/watch?v=D0u8doL-Dx0 or by searching 'BTCC 1990 Round 9'.

Graham Keilloh

TV GUIDE

The thrilling 2021 Formula 1 season gets its Turkish delight this weekend, and Sky Sports F1's coverage starts in the familiar way today (Thursday), with its preview F1 Show at 1830hrs-1930hrs then the drivers' press conference at 1930hrs-2100hrs. Ted Kravitz is back too, bringing his notebooks with him, and you can watch his qualifying review at 1700hrs-1730hrs on Saturday and the race one at 1600hrs-1630hrs on Sunday.

Channel 4's F1 qualifying highlights are at 1830hrs-2000hrs on Saturday and its race highlights are 1830hrs-2100hrs on Sunday.

Tomorrow you have a couple of chances to catch the best of Knockhill's recent British Rallycross round, first at 0400hrs-0500hrs on BT Sport 2 then at 0800hrs-0900hrs over on BT Sport 3. It's shown again a couple of times on Monday too.

Formula 1 goes back to Istanbul this weekend

BT Sport 2 also has an hour of Stateside's new Nitro Rallycross from last weekend's Minneapolis round two; that's on Monday at 1600hrs-1700hrs. While tomorrow there's an hour of the best from WRC's Rally Finland, on BT Sport 3 at 0430hrs-0530hrs and on BT Sport 1 at 1200hrs-1300hrs.

You can also catch this weekend's GT World Challenge Endurance Cup season closer at Barcelona on Sky Sports F1 on Monday at 2200hrs-0000hrs then again on Tuesday at 0900hrs-1100hrs.

Graham Keilloh

LIVE TV

FORMULA 1 TURKISH GRAND PRIX ISTANBUL PARK
Practice 1: Friday, 0900hrs-1045hrs, Sky Sports F1
Practice 2: Friday, 1245hrs-1430hrs, Sky Sports F1
Practice 3: 0945hrs-1110hrs, Sky Sports F1
Qualifying: 1200hrs-1430hrs, Sky Sports F1
Race: Sunday, 1130hrs-1600hrs, Sky Sports F1

BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP DONINGTON
Races and supports: Sunday, 1125hrs-1815hrs, ITV4

WORLD RALLYCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP BELGIUM
Semi-finals and final: Sunday, 1600hrs-1700hrs, BT Sport/ESPN

DTM NORISRING
Qualifying 1: Saturday, 0845hrs-0930hrs, BT Sport/ESPN
Race 1: Saturday, 1215hrs-1400hrs, BT Sport/ESPN
Qualifying 2: Sunday, 0845hrs-0930hrs, BT Sport/ESPN
Race 2: Sunday, 1215hrs-1400hrs, BT Sport/ESPN

DTM TROPHY NORISRING
Race 1: Saturday, 1400hrs-1500hrs, BT Sport X2
Race 2: Sunday, 1400hrs-1500hrs, BT Sport/ESPN

NASCAR CHARLOTTE
Race: Sunday, 1830hrs-2330hrs, Premier Sports 2

LISTINGS

SATURDAY

■ **Oulton Park, Cheshire**
750MC meeting: Club Enduro, Formula Vee, Alfa Romeo, Toyota MR2, Sports 1000 **Starts** racing from 1105hrs (qualifying from 0830hrs) **Admission** adult £14, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000

SATURDAY-SUNDAY

■ **Donington Park, Leics**
BTCC meeting: BTCC, Formula 4, Carrera Cup, Ginetta GT4, Ginetta Junior, Mini Challenge **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1320hrs (qualifying from 0905hrs) Sunday, racing from 0910hrs **Admission** adult £32, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000

■ **Pembrey, S Wales**
Truck meeting: Trucks, Legends, Pickups, MGOC, Junior Saloons, MaX5, Welsh Sports/Saloons **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1105hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 0945hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) **Admission** adult £18, under 13 free **Web** pembreycircuit.co.uk

■ **Snetterton, Norfolk**
BRSCC meeting: Caterham Academy, Caterham Roadsports, Caterham 270R, Caterham 310R, Modified Ford, FF1600, Classic and Modern Motorsport Club, ClubSport Trophy **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1225hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 0925hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) **Admission** adult £22, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000

SUNDAY

■ **Mallory Park, Leics**
750MC meeting: Locost, 750 Formula, Historic 750 Formula, Armed Forces Race, MGCC BCV8 **Starts** racing from 1200hrs (qualifying from 0930hrs) **Admission** adult £15, under 14 free **Web** malloryparkcircuit.com **Contact** 01455 502214

■ **Knockhill, Fife**
SMRC meeting: FF1600, Classic Sports/Saloons, Minis, Fiestas, Citroen C1s **Starts** racing from 1200hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) **Admission** adult £15 **Web** knockhill.com

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Chris Collier hits the right notes with our Art Editor with a Rover

Focuses in flight, from Gary Hill

Robert Ingham's Goodwood pic

Peter Atkins's shot from Mallory

Sliding away, from Sam Nudd

NEXT WEEK — OUT THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14

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MOTORSPORT NEWS
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Kelsey Media
The Granary, Downs Court, Yalding Hill,
Yalding, Maidstone Kent ME18 6AL

EDITORIAL
Editor: Matt James
Tel: 07884 117139
Email: Matt.James@kelsey.co.uk

Deputy Editor: Graham Keilloh
Tel: 07973 829291
Email: Graham.Keilloh@kelsey.co.uk

Reporter: Nick Garton
NIck.Garton@kelsey.co.uk

Art Editor: Mike Stokoe
Tel: 07957 282340
Email: mikestokoe@gmail.com

Contributors
Historics Editor: Paul Lawrence
Rallycross Editor: Hal Ridge
Columnist at large: David Addison
Columnist and track tester: Andrew Jordan
Technical Editor: Carl Faux

ADVERTISING
Director: David Lerpiniere
Tel: 01732 445326
Email: david@talkmediasales.co.uk

Sales Director: Russell Bedford
Tel: 01732 445328
Email: russell.bedford@talkmediasales.co.uk

Ad Manager: Natalie Harman
Tel: 01732 446757
Email: natalie.harman@talkmediasales.co.uk

PRODUCTION
Advert Production Manager: Matt Ryan
Tel: 01732 445755
Email: Production@talkmediasales.co.uk

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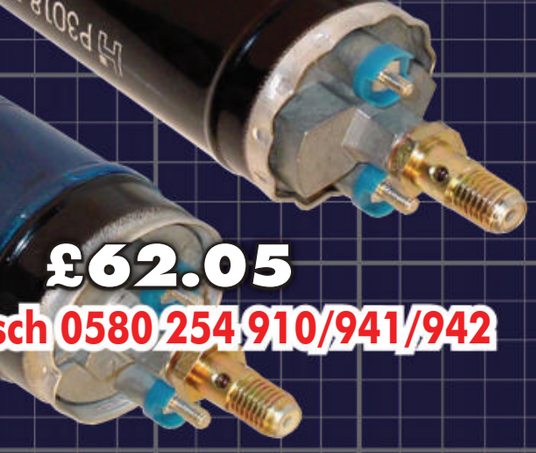

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1969, £27,995. MKII Ford Cortina has been subject of a recent full restoration and built as a replica of the Ex Team Lotus, Alan Mann Racing 1967 Ford Cortina MKII Competition Saloon. Our Cortina was off the road from 1988 and in 2019 bought it need of total restoration. The car was then subject of a full bare shell rebuild and a huge file of invoices are with the car, along with some photos. Please call 01944 758000, Yorkshire and the Humber. (T)
110056

FORD MUSTANG

2007, 9500 miles, £36,996. GT500. This is the sort of specification car you have probably dreamed of but never thought to find in the UK or Europe. Torch red with twin white stripes and black leather interior. It has the usual Shelby specification of the supercharged hand-built 32 valve 485bhp 5.4 litre v8, 6-speed Tremec manual gearbox, power steering, traction contril, unmarked original Shelby 18" alloy wheels, air-con and so much more. Please call 01277365415, South East. (T)
110144

LOTUS ESPRIT

1996, 42352 miles, £42,500. Esprit V8. 3.5 litre V8 engine with 5 speed gearbox. This fine example has an excellent service history and really needs to be seen to be fully appreciated. Please call 01234750205, East of England. (T)
110328

PORSCHE 911

1975, £52,995. On the road the 911 is lively, the 2.7 original engine is in very good order having had a recent top end rebuild. The five speed rebuilt gearbox changes superbly, the clutch is new and having had lots of recent expenditure the car is mechanically very strong. Due to a period of no use, we are planning to fully service the car, and carry out some basic preparation work that is included within the price. Please call 01944 758000, Yorkshire and the Humber. (T)
110060

PORSCHE 911

1972, £119,995. SCW 556L has arrived with us in pristine condition, the bodywork and Viper Green paint are first class, the chrome work exceptional and the interior is outstanding and incredibly sharp. The driving experience is equally impressive, it handles perfectly, the engine is fantastic with superb oil pressure, its free revving and lots of fun. The car feels quick, and the five-speed gearbox is a delight. Please call 01944 758000, Yorkshire and the Humber. (T)
110061

PORSCHE 911

2008, 11500 miles, £129,990. 911 (997) GT3 RS. Carrara White with Black interior and extended alcantara/carbon fibre. Sport Chrono, Carbon package. An awesome machine!. Please call 07495704434, Yorkshire and the Humber.
109907

PORSCHE 944

121000 miles, Porsche / 944 2.7 Lux / Coupe / Blue / Petrol / Manual / 2649cc. To bid on this vehicle online please create an account on the Hobbs Parker Online bidding website then closer to the sale date you can register for the Classic Car auction. This is an online timed auction. Physical viewing at our auction centre from 9:00am to 6:00pm from Mon 25th to Wed 27th and Thurs 28th from 9:00am. Please call 01233506266, South East. (T)
110283

PORSCHE BOXSTER

2002, 94000 miles, £6,600. 2 Porsche Boxsters for the price of one. One silver 2002 model (with new MoT when purchased), and one black model. The silver model is a rare collector edition with factory fitted side skirts and a lower spoiler. Both cars are in tip top condition and can be test driven if required, both are available for one price! £6600 for the 2 cars together which equals 2 for 1 deal. Please call 07956671260, North West.
110397

TVR CHIMAERA

2003, 29732 miles, £29,995. Chimaera 450. Less than 30k miles from new with only 4 previous owners. In Paris Blue, with grey trim. Front seats now in Grey Leather. Extremely good condition. Please call 01636 812700, East Midlands. (T)
109962

VAUXHALL CORSA

2017, 39320 miles, £4,995. 1.4 petrol. Low mileage but Will rise as car is Still in use. Mot due 3rd September 2022. Excellent runner. Cat S was bumper damaged, repaired, new bumper fitted and sprayed to correct car colour. Receipts to prove. Please call 07961056235, Yorkshire and the Humber.
110170

VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN

2017, 38000 miles, £26,349. 2.0 TDi 150 4Motion R-Line 5dr DSG. WHITE DSG R- LINE HAS PAN ROOF, BLACK PACK and AERO STYLING KIT. Please call 02879633011, Ireland.
110106

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THIS CLASSIFIED SECTION WAS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Russell Bedford
Account Director
T: +44 (0) 1732 445 328
E: Russell@talkmediasales.co.uk

Natalie Harman
Account Manager
T: +44 (0) 1732 446 757
E: Natalie.harman@talkmediasales.co.uk

Matt Ryan
Advert Production Manager
T: +44 (0) 1732 446 755
E: Production@talkmediasales.co.uk

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